# The Village

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Issue #248 October 2024

NEWS & FEATURES from Alvechurch, Barnt Green, Blackwell, Burcot Beoley, Cofton Hackett, Finstall, Hopwood, Bordesley, Rowney Green, Lickey, Lickey End, Marlbrook, The Oakalls & everywhere in between!

TheVillage Issue 248 October 2024

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*Bringing you village life for more than 25 years*



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**Front cover: Harvest time, taken by Dennis Brown, of Alvechurch.**

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# 30mph dream may yet come true

**VILLAGERS LIVING on one of the busiest roads in the area are celebrating progress towards a long-awaited speed reduction to 30mph after years of persistent campaigning.**

**Bordesley Matters residents' group has been pushing for this change for many years and this year gained the support of West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner John Campion after he walked with residents on the road to experience the problems for himself.**

**Then last month a key meeting took place between Bordesley Matters residents Karen Kilbride and Alan Bailes (also a district councillor), the new MP Bradley Thomas, the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner and county councillor Marc Bayliss and the county highways director Jon Fraser. The meeting focused on finalising the speed reduction process, which was supported by the county nearly two years ago but never implemented.**

**During the meeting, it was agreed that the county would now begin the necessary work to implement the speed reduction, starting with the creation of technical drawings and a consultation period.**

**Coun Bailes said: "This is a crucial victory for our community. We are grateful for the support of local officials and look forward to seeing these promises turned into action."**

# 'Ghetto estate' go-ahead

A VILLAGE is to have an estate of 34 "affordable" homes imposed on it by a planning inspector despite fears it could lead to "ghettoisation".

The application for the site in the Green Belt in Hopwood has twice been rejected by councillors representing villagers' interest.

But now an appeal against the refusal to give planning permission has been upheld by the Planning Inspectorate, based more than 80 miles away in Bristol.

The plans for the site by the main roundabout in Hopwood were originally supported by Bromsgrove District Council's paid planning officers in the face of public opposition, but members of the elected planning committee still gave it short shrift.

They feared that the estate, to be entirely homes for rent run by a housing association, could lead to the "ghettoisation" of residents in need of lower cost accommodation.

They felt affordable housing worked best when mixed with market housing.

They also expressed serious doubts about the sustainability of the scheme, given its distance from facilities and the shortage of local public transport.

The site has a long history of rejected or withdrawn planning applications and its claimed status as "previously used" through the storage of shipping containers has long been disputed by Alvechurch Parish Council.

This status was, however, accepted by the inspector after her visit to Hopwood. She said she believed the site to be "completely developed" and while the new housing would cause "significant" harm to the openness of the Green Belt, it would not be classed as "substantial"

These are technical planning definitions allowing her to rule that the Green Belt protection could be overlooked.

She also – in what is thought to be the first time Bromsgrove's lack of a five-year housing supply has been used to support building in the Green Belt – cited this shortage as being sufficient to overrule the Alvechurch Neighbourhood Plan's policy of not allowing building outside the village "envelope".

The planning inspector turned the Bromsgrove councillors' objections about a lack of public transport on their head by suggesting that the residents living there would increase demand for, and therefore make more sustainable, better transport services.

She noted in her ruling: "Given the tenure would be socially rented homes for those in housing need, it is my view that these residents would be likely to use the bus services more so than residents purchasing market housing.

"This is because, based on the evidence before me, they are less likely to have access to a private car. Indeed, this could secure a continued future for bus services in the area as the patronage is likely to be increased."

Summing up, in comments which may be surprising to locals, the inspector said: "The proposal would deliver 34 affordable homes to people in housing need, in an area where the delivery of affordable housing has been woeful. It would also re-use previously developed land. These benefits are significant.

"It would also help to sustain existing community facilities, improve public transport and deliver economic benefits. These would be of benefit to the wider community and weigh heavily in favour of the proposal."

Meanwhile, Bromsgrove's planners are reworking the emerging district local plan to work out where they can fit an estimated 9,000 new homes between now and 2041 a rise from 3,500 since Government changed hands.

# 45 minutes stuck in a station lift

NETWORK RAIL has been urged to investigate how a villager became stuck in station lifts for up to 45 minutes when the doors didn't open even-though it had reached ground level.

The pensioner has vowed to always use the stairs at Alvechurch station in future, despite currently finding walking difficult, asking what would have happened if the door mechanism's constant attempts to open had caused a fire.

He told how it was constantly active, opening the door only a few centimetres three times a minute for 45 minutes until an engineer arrived to switch it off and crow-barred the doors open.

District councillor Alan Bailes has now contacted Network Rail seeking answers as to how this could have happened.

■ More than 30 villagers went to the latest Network Rail consultation session to be told that the Barnt Green station lifts project is "on track".

Parish council chairman Robert Cholmondeley said: "Everything is ticking along OK and we suggested they do another session for the residents later in the autumn." Work is expected to start in early January and will be completed in August 2025.

# Panels plan

PLANS HAVE been revealed for a 176-acre solar farm across a vast swathe of village farmland.

The "Oak Valley Energy Park" would stretch from Weatheroak Hill over the fields either side of Icknield Street all the way down to the M42.

The company behind the project, Exagen, is in the consultation phase over its plans to create the facility with a 40-year lifespan and coming online towards the end of this decade.

Picture/Keith Woolford

**THE SOCIAL EATS food and music festival in Barnt Green's Bittell Road playing fields (above) ran more smoothly this year with no complaints received by the parish office.**

**The pouring rain may have reduced the noise and numbers, parish chairman Robert Cholmondeley said, as he recommended the parish council give the go-ahead to a repeat event next year.**

**The organisers have asked for Saturday September 6 2025, but the council is first checking with the Blackwell Music Festival to make sure the dates don't clash as they did this year.**

# Scooter vapers

POLICE are concerned over reports of children on electric scooters and bikes travelling around a village offering to sell vapes to other children.

PC Stuart Head told Alvechurch Parish Council: "If anyone knows the identity of these children, I would be very interested. I don't believe they are from the village."

Coun Keith Wiseman said he had heard the vapes were initially being offered for free.

# Santa secured

BARNT GREEN has secured a Santa for the village's Christmas lights switch-on this year after the "debacle" last year when councillor Charlie Hotham had to buy a red suit and stand in as Father Christmas.

Parish clerk Eleanor Choudry told councillors: "Father Christmas is confirmed." She said she had also booked Arrow Valley Brass band and would be asking Village Vineyards to run a refreshments tent again for the event on Saturday November 30.

***Lighting Up Barnt Green: See Page 8***

# Last cafe standing

ENTERPRISING management at the Old Rose & Crown Hotel have been quick to tell Lickey Hills visitors that there is still a place to get coffee and cake in the beauty spot, despite the current closure of the cafe at the visitor centre.

A banner has appeared outside the venue on Rose Hill (below) declaring: "The only cafe open on the Lickey Hills."

Meanwhile, the Lickey Hills Society has pointed out that the reduction in ranger numbers caused by Birmingham City Council's financial crisis is down from 32 to 20 across all the city's parks and there will only be four rangers based at the Lickeys.

# Aled 'on the case'

ALVECHURCH Parish Council is writing to Conservative county councillor Aled Luckman asking for assistance on a number of matters after he did not attend nor submit a report to their September full council meeting, which parish chairman Marc Worrall said was "disappointing".

Coun Luckman told *The Village* he had been travelling and attending to family matters. He was now "back on the case".

# *The* place to live: Lickey!

"IT IS the new Alderly Edge – it's *the* place to live," Barnt Green parish chairman Robert Cholmondeley declared over reports that England footballer Jude Bellingham, originally from Stourbridge, is building two homes in the area.

Coun Cholmondeley said he had been approached by a journalist from *The Daily Mail* about it and, when told the development was on Plymouth Road, he pointed out that was actually in Lickey and not Barnt Green.

# Lighting up Barnt Green

TWO new designs have been selected to join the much-loved collection of Barnt Green Christmas lights. The eclectic mix of colurful lights have been designed by children over the years and currently include a snowman and a penguin.

St Andrew's First School ran a competition in the summer, where the lucky winners would have their imaginative creation turned into lights to hang along the high street for all villagers to enjoy over Christmas.

The winning entries were selected from a large number of fantastic designs from the first school pupils.

**Lights on: Abigail and Dylan show off their winning entries.**

Abigail Gordon, aged eight, who designed a beautiful angel, and Dylan Grassby, aged five, with his colourful turkey, were delighted to have won the competition and said they were excited to see their lights up in the village.

The lights hang from lampposts along Hewell Road, and will be erected later this year to celebrate the festive season.

Barnt Green's Christmas lights switch-on will be held on November 30 when villagers will be able to see the new designs in pride of place.

**Above: Barnt Green Bridge Club play a hand in The Victoria Inn.**

# A helping hand to fight cancer

BRIDGE clubs across the country joined forces in September to raise money to fight cancer, though their annual Cafe Bridge events.

The annual Barnt Green Café Bridge joined in with the Festival of Bridge, initiated by the English Bridge Union, in aid of Cancer Research UK.

Players travelled between various venues, around Barnt Green, playing a few hands of bridge in each.

Richard Jephcott co-ordinated a number of events across the county, including Barnt Green.

Richard said: "The Festival has provided an opportunity to bring the whole bridge-playing community together.

"There are two bridge clubs in Barnt Green, two in Burcot and one in Bromsgrove as well as many others across the whole country. They've all contributed to raising funds for Cancer Research and the Barnt Green event alone raised more than £1,100."

The successful event finished with a drink in the Victoria Inn, and a prize-giving, presented by village triathlete and cancer survivor Sam Boswell.

**Right: Richard Jephcott and Sam Boswell present the prizes.**

*Image/Derek Brennan*

**THE West Midlands Peaky Blinders group surprised and entertained villagers with their appearance in traditional 1920s era clothing. 12 members visited Alvechurch to spend time on a barge at the marina, and visited five of the village's pubs, starting with a drink at The Weighbridge. After touring the pubs, the group ended at The Red Lion. A member of the group said: "Lots of locals enjoyed seeing the group around the village. This will be an annual meet up now and we look forward to 2025 already."**
**Anyone interested in joining or learning more about what they do can find the group on Facebook at West Midlands Peaky Blinders.**



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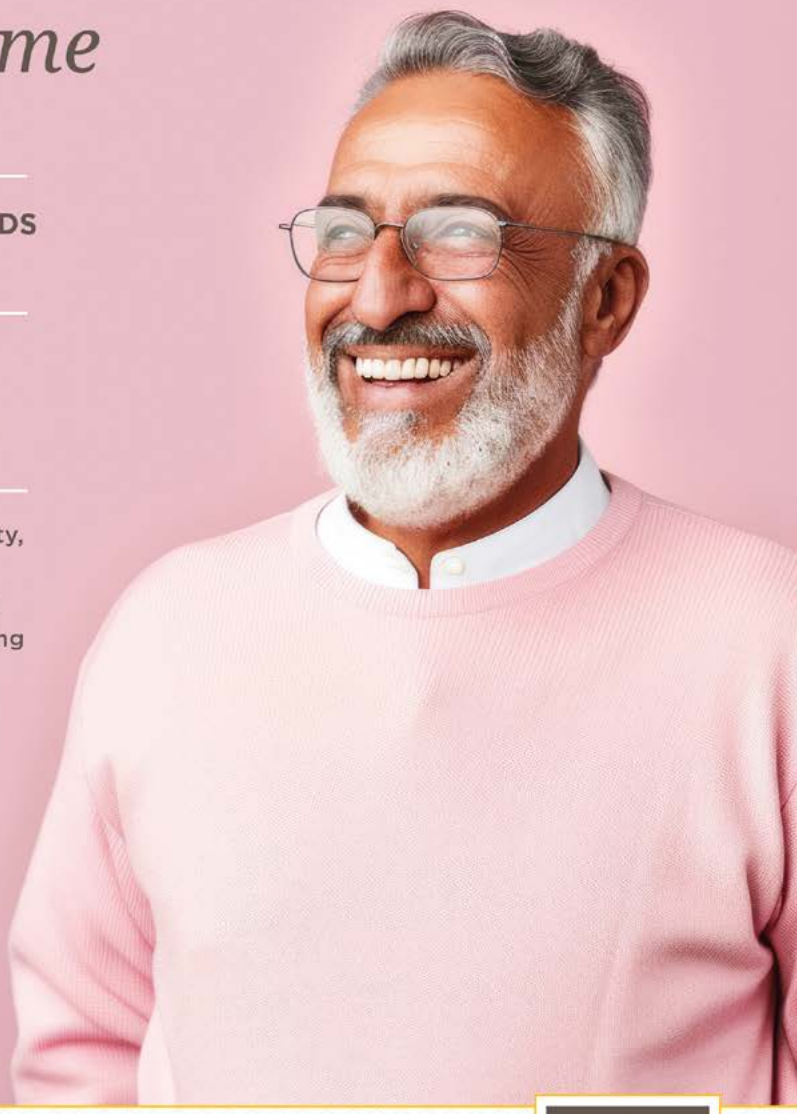

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# NATIONAL AWARDS FINALISTS FOR KING'S

King's Worcester has been recognised for its outstanding co-educational provision for the third consecutive year in the prestigious Independent School of the Year Awards 2024.

THE school has been named a finalist in the Co-educational Independent School of the Year category, standing alongside esteemed schools such as Millfield, Ibstock, and Ballard.

Notably, King's Worcester is, once again, the only Midlands school to reach the finals in this Co-educational category.

The Independent School Awards showcase the very best of independent education in the UK, celebrating extraordinary pupil experiences over the past year. With more than 1,000 entries from independent schools nationwide, being named a finalist is a significant achievement.

Earlier in July, both King's Worcester and King's Hawford were shortlisted in multiple categories. This latest recognition adds to a series of accolades for King's Worcester, including being listed for the second year in The Sunday Times Top 10 West Midlands Independent Secondary School league and top 30 in the UK for sport. These honours come on the heels of a fantastic set of GCSE and A-Level results this summer.

Being shortlisted for these national awards and appearing alongside some of the UKs largest and highly reputable independent schools reflects the hard work and dedication of both staff and pupils.

The winners of the Independent Schools of the Year 2024 Awards will be announced at an awards ceremony in October.

**Jumping for joy:** King's Worcester is delighted to have been recognised for outstanding education for a third consecutive year.

**To discover more about The King's Worcester Foundation of schools and nurseries, visit them at their forthcoming Open Mornings. www.ksw.org.uk/shapeyourfuture or contact the Admissions team on 01905 721742 or via email at registrar@ksw.org.uk.**



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# So, I'll walk which way?

**Dear Editor –** I guess at my age I shouldn't be surprised by anything any more.

However, the comment about walking along Sandhills Green between Alvechurch and Barnt Green attributed by county councillor Adrian Kriss in the September 2024 issue of *The Village* to his highways engineers managed to achieve that in spades.

The thought that I "should not be walking under there" must be one of the most silly comments made to *The Village* in decades

My family has lived in Sandhills Green for more than 50 years, but it would seem now that because of the lack of pedestrian access I now have only three options:

1. Sell my house and move to a "safer" location.
2. Never leave my driveway except in a car.
3. Never leave my driveway, full stop.

Maybe Coun Kriss can propose which of the above is best suited to my needs.

If No. 1, can I expect assistance from the county council to cover the costs of moving?

If No. 2, will the county council offset, in some way, the increased emissions as a consequence of my extra car miles?

If No. 3, can Coun Kriss suggest ways that I can a) get to work and b) manage my life and that of my family whilst avoiding to consequences of 1 and 2 above?

I also despair at the extremely low level of basic literacy in the local population. . . It would seem that the simple words "Road Closed" during the current gas renewal works is beyond the comprehension of a surprisingly large number of drivers!

**Brooke Davis, Sandhills Green**

STAR LETTER

*Brooke Davis is the first recipient of* The Village *"Star Letter" award of £25.*

***We'll be choosing a Star Letter every issue, so send in your views (email address below) for a chance to win £25.***

## There's only one danger on route

**Dear Editor –** Regarding your article "Danger Route" (in issue #247 last month), I am writing to find out what is so dangerous about the route between Barnt Green and Alvechurch via Sandhills Green?

Are there steep drops, falling rocks, poisonous snakes, gangs of thieves, radioactive waste, live munitions, wild bears, torrents of water…?

What possible blight has made this quiet country lane so dangerous that the public "should not walk along it"?

**Martin Ball, Alvechurch**

## Lamb set for pastures new

**Dear Editor –** I want to express with no less than a well poured pint's worth of sadness my regret that Mr Chris Lamb will be casting off from The Weighbridge pub for one final time soon.

The Weighbridge is really the area's only throwback public house, yet to be fully taken over and homogenized into another chain establishment serving the same beers and trying desperately to create an "atmosphere" while simultaneously removing any sense of one.

I really hope that they are able to find a new publican with the passion and care that Mr Lamb obviously put into the place. I do also however – as a father of two young children myself – completely understand his decision to work in a profession that will provide him more time with his family.

A parent only gets to see their children grow up once. No job could ever compete with such an experience.

I love being in a good pub, as I am sure many readers do likewise, however I cannot imagine many worse jobs than running one. Hard work and late nights... no wonder Mr Lamb has called time gentlemen, please.

I raise a glass to him and his new adventures.

**Seb Joy, Cofton Hackett**

## It takes a village

**Dear Editor –** My daughter Anna is probably well known to most people in Alvechurch as she has Down's Syndrome and likes to walk and sing with her headphones on!

While we were on holiday recently, Anna came to work in Alvechurch from Bromsgrove as usual by taxi and happened to get stranded after the taxi home didn't turn up!

I would like to thank and appreciate most kindly, the efforts that people took to ensure she remained safe.

In particular, The Foot Place, The Co op, The Lounge and Gin and Pickles all lent their support and a special thanks to a friend who talked to Anna and gave her a lift back to her care home in Bromsgrove.

I only found out what happened when I returned and feel grateful that we live in a village as kind and inclusive as Alvechurch.

**Gloria Wilson, Alvechurch**

## New home necessities

**Dear Editor –** I read with interest the September issue with the title header "9,000 homes needed" .

As a resident of Cofton Hackett for 15 years, I've seen the area change with the large developments of new homes, houses and apartments blocks.

I agree more homes are needed – especially affordable – to allow more people to purchase their first home .

My only concern, again, is the infrastructure. It's never mentioned. Oh sure they build a community centre, which is all good but doesn't address the issues such as access to a new doctor's practice or a dentist

***continues overleaf***

## Have your say… about anything!

**email: editor@villageonline.co.uk**

**Please include your name and address – even if you request them to be withheld from publication.**
**We reserve the right to edit submissions for reasons of space or legality.**
**The deadline for the next issue is October 10th 2024.**

# WHERE'S VINNY?

**FINSTALL First School pupil, Eliza Gough, aged eight, from The Oakalls, shows off the Mini Vinny she won for finding the little creature in September's hunt the hedgehog competition in *The Village* magazine.**

**If you want to win one for yourself, you'll need to try to find the little hedgehog hiding somewhere in this magazine (the one shown above is just a guide).**

**Tell us where he's hiding via email – see details on the bottom of the page opposite – and please include your name, address and phone number, and we'll draw a winner at random.**

**The closing date is midnight on 10 October 2024. We'll let you know if you've won and you can collect your Mini Vinny from our office – and pose for a photo with your prize!**

*continues from previous page*

which people could actually afford. Maybe the people in power (who sit in their mini government making decisions that affect all of us who call this place home) could look at the infrastructure first, and ask themselves "can an area that is already creaking under the weight of demand cope with more homes but with no improvement to the local infrastructure before they are built?"

**Neil Mortiss, Cofton Hackett**

## Going nowhere

**Dear Editor –** Here we go again (Initiative aims to kick-start village centre *The Village* July/August 2024): another quango paid for, I assume, by the council tax payer to produce an irrelevant document to gather dust on the shelf.

Rather like that produced in the 1960s by a planning consultant to revitalise Alvechurch and my sketches of 20 years ago, more evidence of broken Britain.

So the only item on any agenda is date of next meeting?

**David Barton, Weatheroak**

## My silent garden

**Dear Editor –** Some time ago, I wrote an article titled: "Where Have All the Small Birds Gone?" in *The VIllage*.

Since then, I've transformed my garden to mimic a hedgerow, added feeders, and even a pond, all in hopes of attracting small birds.

Initially, I had plenty of jackdaws, magpies, and pigeons, and I wondered if they were driving the small birds away.

However, during the last National Bird Count, my garden was alive with robins, blackbirds, hedge sparrows, long-tailed tits, great tits, blue tits, and nesting sparrows and wrens.

I had to refill my four large feeders every other day because the garden was full of birdsong, and I enjoyed the company of my feathered friends. But about a month ago, everything changed. The birds vanished – small and large alike. The sky is now eerily silent.

I recently noticed a dozen dead pigeons near the junction of Tanyard Lane and the main road by the pub. Even the dovecote at the house on the corner was quiet.

Does anyone have any idea what's happening? Could it be bird flu? A few birds still visit the garden, but none seems to stay for long. I'd appreciate any insights!

**Richard Page, Alvechurch**

*Editor's Note: We passed this on to our Village birding correspondent, who has been inspired to answer this question in their article this month. The Anonymous Birder explains more on page 35.*

## Parakeet patrol

**Dear Editor –** Having lived in Alvechurch for more than 40 years, and enjoying the large variety of birds who visit our garden we were very surprised to receive a visit from a parakeet during the month of August (pictured, below).

The parakeet appeared quite at home enjoying the sunflower seeds and has also been spotted in Withybed.

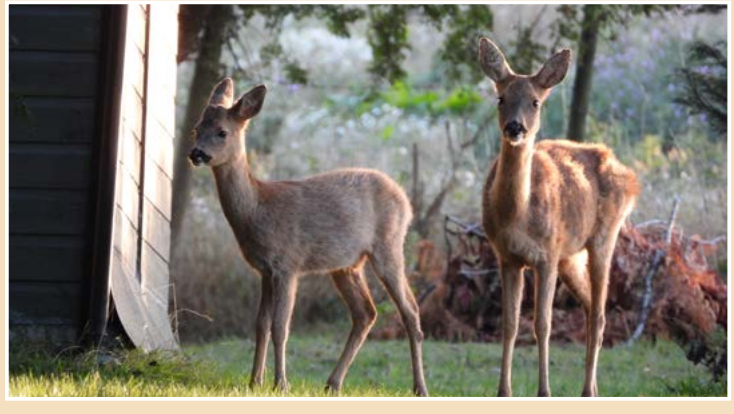
**K & J Stirrup, Alvechurch**

*Editor's Note: Our Anonymous Birder will be back next month to answer this in their column.*

## Who's at the back door, deer?

**Dear Editor –** A gang of young Roe deer has been visiting our garden in Bordesley most of the days in the morning (pictured, below).

**Alex Nowek, Bordesley**



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# JOIN IN ALL THE FUN AT COFTON PARK MANOR

Following their summer of fun, Cofton Park Manor is gearing up for another eventful month, with fun for all ages. Find out more about what they have in store for residents and guests this October . . .

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# 25 YEARS OF CARING

A luxury all-inclusive care home in Bromsgrove has celebrated their General Manager's 25th anniversary working in care.

Burcot Grange and Lodge, which is part of the Berkley Care Group, celebrated Victoria Osborne's 25th anniversary working at the care home with two special events.

The special occasions brought together colleagues, residents, and families to honour her commitment and contributions to the home.

Vicky began working at Burcot Grange and Lodge while volunteering for her Duke of Edinburgh Award.

Since then, she has worked in various departments at the home, including housekeeping, kitchen assistant, and as a carer. Her dedication and hard work have led to her rise through the ranks, ultimately becoming General Manager.

The celebrations began on 1st August with a surprise party at The Lodge. This event was planned a day early to add an element of surprise. The main celebration took place on 2nd August, the actual anniversary date, at The Grange.

Vicky was momentarily diverted to another home to allow for the final preparations. On her return, she was led to believe there was an issue, only to be surprised by everyone gathered in the home's gardens.

The festivities included a two-hour performance by singer, Barry, who entertained the guests with a selection of songs while they enjoyed a variety of drinks. The kitchen team also prepared an array of charcuterie boards and a celebratory cake for the occasion.

Both events were attended by old employees, current team members, residents, and their families, highlighting the impact Vicky has had on the community.

The celebrations were a fitting tribute to her remarkable career and the positive impact she has had on the lives of many. Vicky said: "I am truly overwhelmed and grateful for the surprise celebrations and the outpouring of love and support from everyone.

**Congratulations Vicky:** Celebrating a milestone achievement.

"These 25 years have been incredibly rewarding and it has been an honour to work with such a dedicated team and wonderful residents.

"I look forward to many more years of service and continuing to make a positive impact in our community."

Burcot Grange and Lodge's Customer Relations Manager, Kiran Chaggar-Smith, said: "We wanted to do something special to mark Vicky's 25 years of incredible service. Her dedication and compassion have touched so many lives, and it was important to us to show our appreciation.

"Organising these surprise celebrations was a joy, and seeing Vicky's reaction made all the effort worthwhile.

"We are grateful for all that she does for us and these celebrations are just a small token of our gratitude for everything she has done and continues to do," said Kiran.

**Let her eat cake!**

**A few words of thanks from Vicky.**



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Telephone Kiran on 0121 445 5552, or visit: burcotgrange.co.uk

# RETURN OF THE SCARECROWS

VILLAGERS of all ages are delighted to see the return of Alvechurch Scarecrow Festival this half term.

After a year off in 2023, homemade scarecrows will once again appear back on the streets of the village, all in support of The Lounge and their work in the community.

The event will run from 28 October until 3 November and there are exciting prizes to be won for those making scarecrows, in a range of categories (previous categories have included "Best Scarecrow" and "Best Display").

**The Highway Rat: A recreation of the treat-loving rat on Red Lion Street.**

## JOIN IN THE FUN

If you are interested in making a scarecrow and entering the competition, please sign up by 25 October to be included on the Trail Map.

To register, send a message to the Alvechurch Scarecrow Festival Facebook page with your name, email address, and scarecrow location.

It costs £5 to enter a scarecrow, which can be donated through the festival JustGiving page:

www.justgiving.com/fundraising/alvechurch-scarecrows-2024

Alternatively, you can also register your scarecrow in person at The Lounge.

If you're interested in creating a scarecrow, follow the festival social media for updates and details about free hay/straw collection point for entrants.

As with previous years there will be different categories to enter, where the best scarecrows will take home some fantastic prizes. A spokesperson for the festival said: "We've already received generous prize donations from local businesses, including:

- A free breakfast/lunch for two families at The Lounge,
- A free boiler service from Breeze Hot and Cold Installations
- A free haircut from Barber Dave, a prize from Gin & Pickles,
- A voucher for Ritual,
- A prize from At Home with Lou,
- A prize from Bliss,
- A dance voucher from Amy Greaves School of Dance,
- A voucher for an Indian head massage and yoga from Sofia Well-being,
- A voucher from Drama Tots,
- A cash prize from *The Village* magazine,

and more fantastic prizes to be announced."

## VISIT THE SCARECROWS

Maps will be available from 28 October for £2. Note that The Lounge is closed to the public on Mondays due to group activities inside, but maps will be available to buy from Alvechurch Library (cash only), or you can donate £2 via the JustGiving page to receive a digital copy by email or Facebook Messenger.

From 29 October to 1 November there will be a stall outside The Lounge offering maps, cakes, snacks, refreshments, raffle tickets, and more.

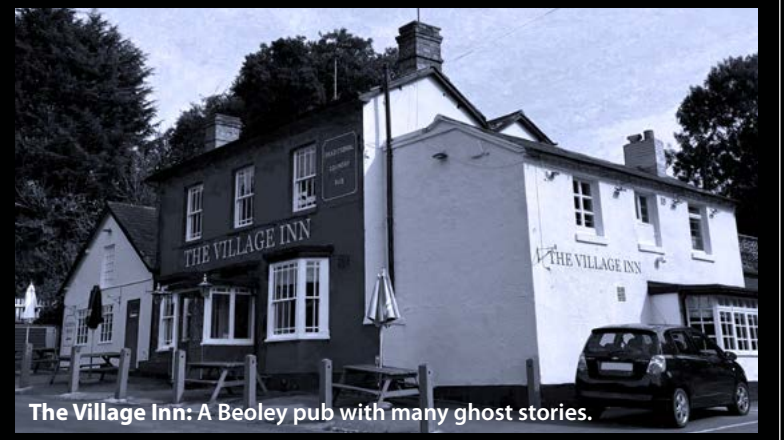
All proceeds from the tickets and entries will go to The Lounge to support their fantastic work in the community.

For any questions, please contact the Alvechurch Scarecrow Festival Facebook Page.

**Sherlock Holmes: Guards the Village Hall.**








**The Village Inn: A Beoley pub with many ghost stories.**

# Beoley: the haunted inn

THE historic village of Beoley lies between Alvechurch and Redditch. Parts of the village such as St Leonard's Church date back to the 12th century. Even older Icknield Street, a Roman road also runs through Beoley.

Local historian and author, **Anne Bradford,** whose ghost stories and investigations *The Village* has featured in the past, writes: There are perhaps more paranormal tales from Beoley than any other small village around.

There's the Beoley goblin, said to jump on the backs of horses when going up the hill, the Beoley charcoal burner who was burned to death and you can still hear his screams when the wind is high.

There's the ghost of Beoley vicarage, and a vicar who kept coming back to take the service long after he was dead and buried. Many claim to have seen the apparition of Moses Shrimpton who killed PC Davies on the Icknield Street between Weatheroak and Beoley and there are innumerable accounts of phantoms at the Beoley cross roads.

It's no surprise therefore that The Village Inn, a 19th century coach house which provides traditional pub food today, has it's fair share of stories.

In her book *Haunted Pubs and Hotels in and around Worcestershire*, Anne published the following account from Angela, the licensee of The Village Inn, (at the time in 2012), who recalled the unexplained phenomena she experienced.

Angela said: So many weird incidents have happened here that I don't take any noticed of them now.

One of the most annoying things is the way that the doors unlock themselves. You carefully lock a door and then a few minutes later you find that it's open. Only two weeks ago I know I locked the side door but a short while later it was swinging open.

The power cuts are a nuisance as well. We're the only building that gets them. I live next door and sometimes the electricity is off here but working in my house and we're on the same system.

In the small room we call "the snug" there are two rows of lights, an upper and a lower. I've known the upper lights go off while the lower lights are still on and they have the same fuse!

The washroom taps turn themselves on and sometimes we find ourselves mopping up a puddle where there is no water supply. I'm always here late at night and I hear all kinds of strange noises upstairs but that could be anything, although one night I did hear footsteps going up the stairs. I went to investigate and no one was there. It doesn't frighten me, I don't find it scary.

The snug seems particularly prone to these strange events. It's often inexplicably hot in here and then suddenly, it will go icy cold. I was sitting in there one day when the leaves of a plant nearby started mysteriously moving around and all the windows and the doors were closed.

Sometimes late at night I switch all the lights off and there's a strange glow coming from the snug. I've no idea why it should be haunted as it's not the old part of the inn and it was built over a pathway.

Some of the locals say that the room was used for the laying out of corpses.

We had a psychic night recently and the participants said they could sense a woman. I wasn't surprised, several customers say that they have felt something walk towards me in the corridor of the snug and I have felt something go past me on the other side of the bar.

Then late one night in January 2012 I actually saw her. She came into the snug from the corridor and moved quickly across the room to the far window. I could see her clearly although she was slightly hazy as if I was seeing her through thin smoke. There was no colour, she was more black and white.

She was wearing a long white apron down to the floor which was quite dirty. She was slightly bent as if she was quite elderly. I only saw her for a few seconds.

The following month I saw a man, also in the snug late at night. He was balding and dressed very smartly white a white collar and a waistcoat.

He looked Victorian. He was just standing there in front of the far window. I was quite taken aback. The most distinctive thing about him was his eyes which were very bright and piercing. He was clearer than the woman and in sepia, not black and white. He was there for a few seconds before he faded away.

I didn't tell anyone because if you say that you have seen a ghost, people think that you're barmy!

# Singing in the rain

ALTHOUGH the day of Blackwell Music Festival dawned wet, this year's village festival was fully sold out, and well attended by hardy villagers who didn't let a bit of rain dampen their day (or evening!).

Seven acts entertained the crowds in the field in Blackwell, beginning with *Red by Night,* a young rock/indie band of four in their mid-teens. Of a similar vintage, *The Tysms*, fronted by Jack Hodgy, played both original and cover songs.

Next up was bluegrass band; *The Folly Brothers* playing all manor of instruments like banjo, mandolin, bouzouki, double bass and guitar.

The 50 person strong *Got2Sing Choir* belted-out well-known numbers, and at one point, during a particularly bad downpour, they offered their rendition of *Singing in the Rain*.

The headline act *The Score* had everyone on their feet throughout the rain showers, dancing until they dropped. The group's set included songs from the 50s through to Motown and electro pop, much to the excitement of the crowd.

Event organiser, Emma Westwood, and her team of volunteers said they were over the moon that it went so well, and there were more smiles than ever as people made their way home in the dark.

**Above:** The Score dominate the evening stage.

**No damp spirits:** Festival-goers party on despite the rain.

**Above:** Happy Accident belt out tunes for the crowd.
**Below:** Fun was had by all ages at Blackwell Music Festival.

*Images by Keith Woolford and Dennis Brown*

# A towering success

ST Laurence Church, Alvechurch, opened its doors to villagers this September to celebrate Heritage Day, a festival of history and culture across the country.

Visitors of all ages were able to explore the church to a background melodies of "beautiful songs" as one three-year-old villager remarked, played by The Midland Sinfonia. While outside, Alvechurch Morris Men and Aelfgythe Morris group entertained the crowds.

Children (and some older) enjoyed hook-a-duck, lucky dip and other traditional games, and there was also the opportunity to give archery a go.

Brave teddies also tested their confidence, when they were dropped from the roof of the church tower, (with parachutes of course) to float gently to the ground below.

Cakes and refreshments were on sale in The Ark, along with stalls from village organisations including Better Together (senior companionship and concierge), the Scouts, the Little Kitchen Club (who teach little ones skills in the kitchen) and the Amy Greaves School of Dance, who also entertained visitors with performances from their Diddy dancers and solo routines from older dancers.

**Members of the Church team with parish councillor Marc Worrall (centre) and Rev Gail Rogers.**

The day was a great success, especially as rain held off. One villager said: "The Heritage day was excellent!! My daughter and I were there till the end. We spent the whole day there", while another agreed: "It was so good! Lots of things going on, crafts, music, morris men!" Celebrations were two-fold on this occasion, as the St Laurence team are also delighted to be the recipients of a grant of £189,000 from The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

This grant will cover two thirds of the cost of necessary work to protect and conserve the church, most importantly, helping with essential work to restore the church tower and clock face.

The tower, which is the oldest part of the church as it currently stands, is in danger of decay and becoming unusable, including the much-loved church bells which Alvechurch residents often hear chime out across the village.

St Laurence Church is a Grade II* listed building, which could also be at risk should the tower and clock face not receive the restoration and care it needs.

By halting the decay, this project aims to safeguard the architectural integrity of the church and retain the historic tower for generations to come.

The Rev Gail Rogers, Vicar of St Laurence, said: "We are thrilled to have received this support from The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

"Thanks to money raised by National Lottery players we can restore and preserve our historic church tower and clock face. Through this we aim to increase community engagement, and ensure the long-term viability of St Laurence Church as both a cultural landmark, a place of worship and a community hub."

**Young dancers performing, from the Amy Greaves School of Dance.**

**Village youngsters get a music lesson from The Midland Sinfonia.**

**Left:** An intricate Aelfythe hat.
**Right:** The Rev Gail takes aim.

**A teddy prepares to parachute!**

**Green men: Alvechurch Morris.**

# Hills are alive with heritage

WHILE the Lickey Hills Country Park was open for visitors to explore during the heritage open weekend in September, the cafe remained closed. Although refreshments were not available, the Warren Lane Visitor Centre was still open for visitors who were able to peruse and learn from the displays, *writes Keith Woolford.*

The space freed up by the cafe closure, did mean that the Lickey Hills Local History Society were able to make use of it for allowing a variety of local maps, paintings and illustration to be on show. Free booklets, leaflets and postcards were handed out to those visiting.

There were four WWI and WWII walks over the weekend. During the walks, some visitors had the benefit of having Head Ranger Steve Hinton explain the importance of the Hills over these periods. Of particular interest was the quarry, which was specially opened for the heritage open weekend. Guided tours of the Gun Butts also offered a unique perspective.

Visitors had a great time over the weekend, with some commenting: "Very informative and enthusiastic walk with Steve the Ranger – excellent … we learnt a lot" and "Absolutely fabulous". The history society members were delighted with this year's event.

**Above:** Examining the Lickey Quartzite.





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# HOW DO YOU WANT TO GIFT: DEAD OR ALIVE?

Martin Pryor explains the different approaches to wealth transfer, and the positive and negative aspects each approach can have on your long-term financial planning.

MOST investors' primary motivation for financial planning is to ensure they don't outlive their money.

Disciplined investors, most of whom are supported by a competent and caring financial adviser, can, however, reach a position where it becomes clear that they will never spend all their money in their lifetime.

While this position is a luxury, it is well deserved and can be traced back to their decisions over multiple decades.

Some investors can be convinced to increase their spending on activities and causes that bring them meaning, but many will still die with a sizeable net worth. They are driven by a desire to leave a legacy to those they love, and their wealth becomes a river that will flow to the next generation.

Studies suggest that we will witness one of the most significant wealth transfers in history over the coming decades.

This presents opportunities and challenges for families and raises important questions about how and when to pass on assets.

**THE TRADITIONAL APPROACH**

For a long time, most families have defaulted to the conventional method of wealth transfer, leaving an inheritance after death.

This approach offers several advantages. It allows investors to maintain control of their assets throughout their lifetime, insuring against unforeseen setbacks or expenses. The extent and cost of future medical care are difficult to predict, and more wealth only means more freedom and opportunities.

However, this traditional model also comes with potential drawbacks.

One significant concern is timing – your heirs may not need the money when they finally receive it, possibly being close to retirement themselves. By waiting until after your passing to transfer wealth, you miss the opportunity to witness and guide the impact of your generosity.

There's something uniquely rewarding about seeing your hard-earned wealth make a difference in your loved ones' lives while you're still here.

Additionally, depending on your jurisdiction, there may be higher estate taxes compared to lifetime giving strategies, potentially reducing the amount your beneficiaries ultimately receive.

The traditional inheritance model offers security and control, but it's important to weigh these benefits against the potential missed opportunities for impact and guidance.

**THE "WARM HAND" APPROACH**

An alternative to the traditional inheritance model is the "warm hand" approach – giving while you're still alive.

This strategy has gained popularity in recent years as more people recognise the potential benefits of transferring wealth during their lifetime.

One of the most significant advantages is the ability to witness the impact of your generosity firsthand. There's a unique joy in seeing how your financial support can change lives, whether helping a grandchild through college or giving your children a head start with weddings, house purchases or business projects.

The warm hand approach also allows you to provide guidance alongside your gifts. You can share your financial wisdom, helping recipients learn to manage and appreciate the wealth they're receiving.

However, this approach has its challenges. Giving away assets during your lifetime gives you less control over your wealth. You also risk jeopardising your financial security if you give away too much too soon. Ensuring you retain enough assets to support yourself through retirement and potential healthcare needs is crucial.

Many people start by utilising annual gift allowances, which can provide tax benefits while gradually transferring wealth.

Contributing to education costs is another popular option, whether paying school fees or funding a college savings plan.

Some choose to help with major life expenses, such as providing a down payment for a child's first home.

**CRAFTING YOUR STRATEGY**

Navigating the wealth transfer dilemma often involves not choosing one approach over the other but rather finding the right balance between lifetime giving and traditional inheritance. This balance will be unique to each individual and family based on various factors.

As your financial advisers, we're here to help you understand your options, consider the implications, and create a personalised plan that aligns with your goals and values.

By taking a thoughtful, balanced approach to wealth transfer, you can create a legacy that provides financial support to your loved ones and imparts your values and wisdom to future generations.

It's a powerful way to ensure that your life's work continues to have a positive impact long into the future.

**Martin Pryor**
***Lifestyle Financial Planner***

*For more information, please contact us*
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*This article should not be regarded as personal advice. You should seek independent financial advice to apply these theories to your circumstances.*

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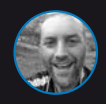
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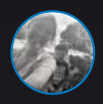
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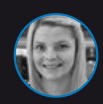
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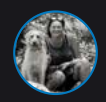
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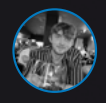
**Mitchell Thomas**
Graduate Trainee Financial Advisor

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# Free up your options

Mark Meads, from **Village Financial**, explains how equity release can support you, and improve your lifestyle and retirement plans.

I'LL often get asked what are the main reasons for releasing equity from a property, below I have listed some of the common uses:

■ To supplement retirement income: Many retirees find that their pension or savings are not enough to cover their expenses in later life. Equity release can provide a source of additional income that can help them maintain their standard of living.

■ To pay off debts: Equity release can be used to pay off outstanding debts, such as interest only mortgages, credit card balances or loans, which can reduce financial stress and improve cash flow.

■ To make home improvements: Homeowners may choose to release equity in their property to fund home renovations or repairs, which can improve their quality of life and increase the value of their home.

■ To help family members: Some people choose to do equity release to help their children or grandchildren, for example, by providing a deposit for a property purchase or funding education.

■ To go on holiday or travel: Equity release can provide the funds needed to take a dream holiday or travel to new destinations, which can be a rewarding experience for retirees.

■ To maintain independence: Equity release can help older homeowners to stay in their own home and maintain their independence, by providing the funds needed to pay for care or support services.

**Mark Meads (above), and his team will help you navigate your equity release options.**

**Village Financial are here to help with all your mortgage requirements.**
**To get in touch please call 07730 011897 or email mark.meads@villagefinancial.co.uk**

*A Lifetime Mortgage will reduce the value of your estate and may affect your entitlement to means-tested benefits and tax status. The impact of not servicing monthly interest payments on a Lifetime Mortgage is that the outstanding debt can grow rapidly, thus reducing the value of your estate. For example, if the interest rate was 7% a year, a £50,000 loan would double to £100,000 after 10 years assuming no repayments are made. This is an example for illustrative purposes only and personalised advice and recommendations should be sought from a qualified professional. You are strongly advised to register a lasting power of attorney. This will allow your affairs to be managed by somebody else if your mental abilities significantly decline.*

A wooded view of Withybed and Alvechurch.

# TREES OF LIFE

OCTOBER is a good time to look at trees as they prepare for winter. They are an important part of the plant kingdom, distinguished from herbal plants by having woody stems (trunks) which do not die back in winter.

We have dozens of native trees, in twenty-odd families, and this diversity is important as well as the overall number of them.

Most of us think of two kinds of trees, evergreen and deciduous, though these are not really scientific classifications. The latter shed their leaves in autumn. Evergreens shed their leaves too, but gradually through the year.

Many of the evergreens are in a separate class of trees called gymnosperms, which have different kinds of seeds and needle-like leaves. All the other trees are dicotyledonous plants.

Britain has only three native gymnosperms, each in

***continues overleaf***

As the leaves change, **Mary Green** takes a stroll through the trees found around us, and tells us more about our leafy neighbours.

*continues from previous page*

a different family: Scots pine, yew and juniper. Only one of these, yew, grows round here naturally, though Scots pines are introduced.

Yew is quite common in old woodland and much planted in churchyards. It can live to a great age and there are examples in Alvechurch, Tardebigge and Cofton churchyards among others which are hundreds of years old. The pink berries are highly poisonous to mammals but not to birds, which don't digest the inner seeds so they pass through.

Scots pines are among many other pines planted round here, distinguished by reddish bark from the others. They have cones and needles. Very little grows on ground under them but they do host some birds like goldcrests and can link with particular fungi like fly agarics. In the wild in Scotland they share the same fungal structure underground as heather and are part of the local ecology.

The only other evergreen native here is holly, our only member of its family. Its berries feed birds (again poisonous to us). Its young growth is the food plant for the holly blue butterfly and the white flowers in May provide nectar. It forms part of the thorny understory of woodland and helps protect growing oaks and other slow growing trees.

The leaves are edible to livestock and used to be cut as a winter feed. (the higher branches generally carry non-spiky leaves, with spikes on the lower one to prevent grazing.)

Holly, like many trees, has separate male and female trees, with only the females carrying the familiar red berries. It plays a huge role in folklore, both pagan and Christian.

All trees are a vital part of the cycle of life that includes us. They take in carbon and store it and give out oxygen for us to breathe. They interact with fungi and host insects and other invertebrates, birds and mammals. They absorb pollutants.

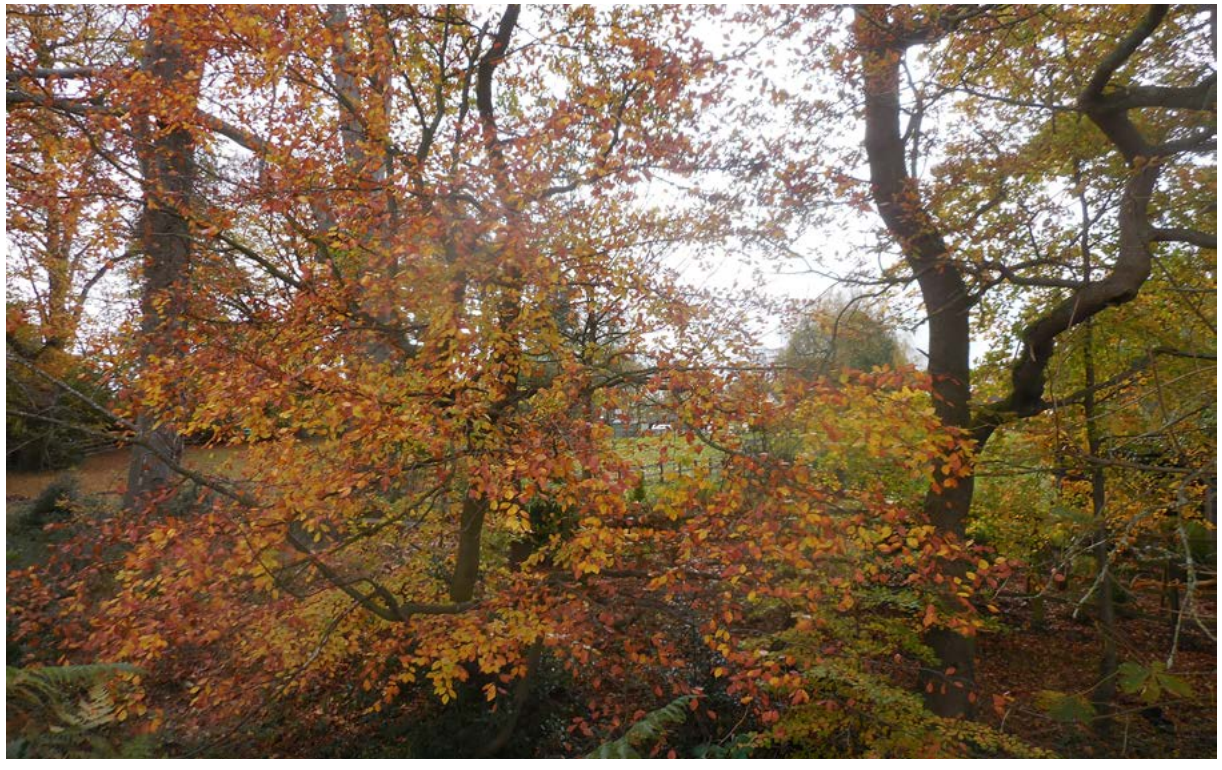
In addition, deciduous trees support a network of plant life, especially spring-flowering herbs.

The countryside round here in earlier times would have been open woodland and remnants of this remain in small woods and lines of hedgerows. Unfortunately, farmers who are stuck in the 20th Century and some Councils flail-cut their hedges and inhibit the growth of trees. More progressive ones now realise, as ancient ones did, the importance of letting the tops of hedges grow into trees – and do all the things described in the last paragraph.

The oak is the dominant tree here and I can walk for half an hour from my house and find oaks over 500 years old and young saplings alike. The UK has more ancient oaks than the rest of western Europe put together.

The predominant kind here is the English oak which hosts thousands of species of other creatures and fosters fungi and herbal growth. They often mark old pathways, like the Salt Path from Alvechurch to Droitwich, or boundaries, like the oaks at the edge of the Bishop's Palace ground in Rowney Green.

Oaks are known to communicate with each other underground and will together in any year produce a bumper crop of acorns (to ensure future growth) or few acorns (to control the population of mammals and birds that feed on them). This looks like being a good year. Like holly, oak figures hugely in folklore.



**Beech trees in autumn:** with beautiful orange leaves, often planted on hilltops.

In the same family as oak are beech and sweet chestnut. Both grow here but are not so common. Beech likes a more alkaline soil and was planted especially on hilltops (like Frankley Beeches).

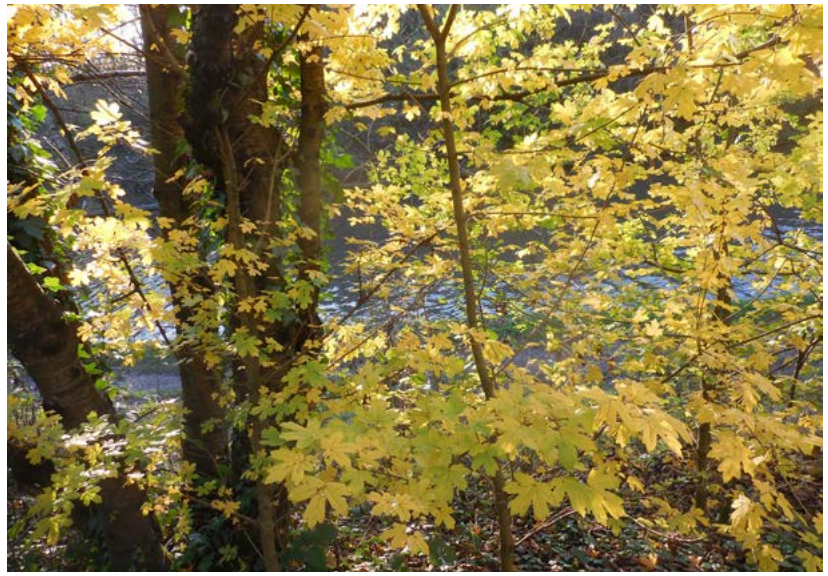
They have a nutritious nut (mast) which was fed to animals and occasionally used by humans for oil. Sweet chestnut was not originally a native but came over with the Romans as a food tree and has been here long enough to be thought native.

There are some ancient huge chestnuts with their distinctive twisty bark in Piper's Hill wood near Hanbury and scattered ones near Alvechurch. They flower quite late, in July, and produce edible nuts in a good summer. Horse chestnuts (conkers) are a completely different tree from a different family, introduced a coupe of centuries ago but superficially similar with twisty bark and hard brown nuts in prickly cases.

Birch and alder share a family. Alder is common here especially by water.







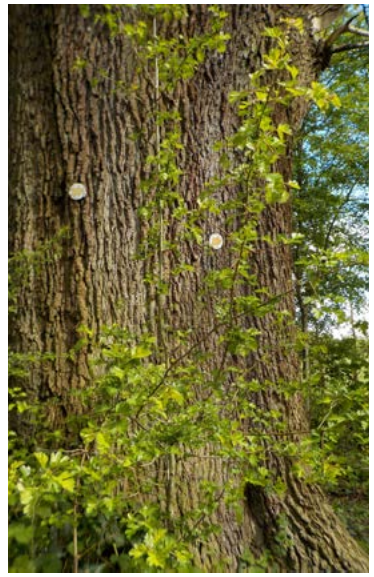
**Autumn field maple:** 'Hand-like' yellow autumn leaves.

Its interaction with other wildlife is hugely important. It fixes nitrogen in the soil though bacteria, meaning it can grow on poor soil and also help other plants grow.

Its leaves feed many moth larvae, its seeds feed birds like goldfinches, and it hosts many mosses and fungi. It is the only deciduous tree that forms cones. Its wood withstands water and was much used in the past for wooden boats, quaysides and clog soles. It also makes charcoal and gunpowder. A green dye was made from it. It's all along the canal here.

Birch is more common in northern and moorland areas, but grows well here too and is a favourite for roadside planting. Its silver bark is well known and persists even after the wood rots. Like alder it hosts many insects and fungi. In mythology it is a tree of purification, and it really does have an effect by attracting nutrients other trees can't and restoring soil health.

All these deciduous trees so far (apart from horse chestnut) are wind pollinated. The have male and female flowers, usually in catkin form for the males, sometimes on the same tree, sometimes different. They can flower early in the year when insects are few. It also means they produce huge amounts of pollen, so contribute a lot to early season hay fever!



**An ancient oak stands strong.**

**A poplar sprouts leaves in spring.**

Hazel is another catkin tree, and clearly shows how hard wind pollination can be. Male catkins ("lambs' tails") and tiny red female flowers are on the same tree, but they prefer to pollinate a different tree to spread the genes, so the male and female flowers don't come quite at the same time in the hope of coinciding with another tree!

They're common round here and noticeable because they "self-cop-

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pice" - growing in groups of small stems instead of one big trunk.

Hornbeam is in the same family, a very hard wood which slightly resembles a beech tree and has catkins. It grows in some woods here and there is a lovely laid hedge of it in Alvechurch.

Willows, growing by water like alders, are a big catkin-bearing family with many varieties and are mostly wind pollinated.

Crack willow is common here, a short lived and fast-growing tree. Osiers or withies used to be grown for weaving, as in Withybed where I live. Sallows or pussy willows are slightly different as they are insect pollinated and loved by early bees.

Poplars are in the same family and these include the wonderful black poplars usually growing near water, growing very big but easily toppled by storms, like the one in The Meadows in Alvechurch later carved into a snake.

Ash and elm are in different families but both illustrate the complex fate of trees over the last century. Elm was once common here. In the 1960s it was decimated by Dutch Elm Disease, which arrived from abroad (there was a good supply of firewood on my parents' farm for a time!). The disease persists, but so does elm. It's all over the hedges here, often growing up into a proper tree and briefly flowering and fruiting before dying back again. A different variety, wych elm, was more resistant and these are more likely to remain as full trees, though they are less common here.

Until recently ash was a very common tree and grows so readily from seed that it was almost considered a weed. Then came Ash Dieback, a fungal disease again brought in from abroad. It is working its way through our trees, and we can see them gradually disappearing locally. No one is sure yet if some will survive long term.

There are two natives in the Acer or maple family. The very common sycamore is not much liked for some reason but grows well where other trees won't.

Field maple is a common local tree, very beautiful with its conical shape and especially its yellow autumn leaves like little hands. Both were much used for small wooden items, and have winged seeds or "keys" loved by birds and small mammals.

Lime trees are also quite common, especially loved by Victorians, with similar winged seeds.

These are the larger trees you find round here. Smaller ones include elder, wayfaring tree and guelder-rose, all in one family, and spindle, dogwood, and buckthorn in separate ones. One family has currants and gooseberries, another has gorse and broom.

Then there are all our fruit trees in the Rose family that I wrote about in a previous article. Most of these have more obvious flowers and are insect pollinated, followed by berries. This year has been a bit hit and miss for them depending on when they flowered: a cool wet spring meant a lack of pollinators.

**Female holly, with bright red berries.**

All these trees are also plants for specific insects and fungi. Buckthorn hosts the caterpillars of the yellow Brimstone moth. Spindle has its very own moth, the Spindle Ermine, which forms white webs on the bushes. Gooseberries are pollinated by wasps. Elder has a special fungus, which used to be called Judas' Ear or Jew's Ear following the myth that Judas hanged himself from an elder, but is now called Jelly Ear. Berries poisonous to us are eaten by birds and we eat the ones that aren't.

It doesn't matter if you don't know the names of all these dozens of trees and the 20 families, but it helps to recognise just how diverse they are and how they all interact with plants and animals around them.

A tree is more than just a tree and a wood more than a collection of trees.

■ **I wrote this poem some years ago and I still smile when I pass this tree.**

## Redditch Oak

The town began as an overspill
From the city, back in the boom years
Until the town too is full and spilling
Over this green hill. I saw the plans
And now here it is, the ground torn up
The diggers in, ready for building.
But in the middle, they have left an oak
In its cordon sanitaire. Big, spreading
Now clothed in bright green, outlandish
In this morning's spring mud. I worry
They haven't left enough space round it
For its roots, which will have spread wide -
Will be under the houses and pretty gardens
Growing, talking and troubling people's dreams.





**The** anonymous **birder** *How to enjoy village birdlife*

# WHERE HAVE ALL THE BIRDS GONE?

THIS month's birding feature was inspired by a letter sent to *The Village*, from one of our readers, (see page 14 for said letter), who asked the question: "Where have all the small birds gone?"

The letter raises several interesting points, so some thoughts on what may be happening.

A good starting point may be to classify what a small bird is. Over half of all birds are known as Passerines or "perching" birds; these are birds which have three toes facing forward and one facing backwards, hence the ability to perch.

It's not just small birds which fall into this group, however, the crow family are perchers too. Interestingly woodpeckers aren't passerines due to their two-forward two-back toe arrangement.

Sometimes people are referring to songbirds too, so for the purposes of this article, it might be easier to refer to "garden birds" of whatever size and perching ability.

They will certainly be attracted by providing food, in addition to that which they find naturally (as discussed in the August issue of *The Village*). The increased numbers of visitors in the winter, will be because there is less natural food available (look out for the RSPB garden watch, which is in January).

A pond is also beneficial (if not frozen) for drinking, washing and contributing to some food sources as the weather warms.

Adding hedgerow plants will provide nesting sites and food when well developed, but birds, and all organisms in the natural food chain, depend on a large joined-up habitat to make a real difference to their population. So if all of us do something to encourage them, or even not discourage them, it is more likely to have an impact.

**Attract garden visitors this winter: A woodpecker snacks on nuts.**
*Image/Dennis Brown*

During the spring, garden birds will be pairing up and mating. Birdsong for claiming territories and pairing up will naturally signal their presence.

As spring rolls into summer, broods are being raised and furious feeding activity again keeps visibility high.

So what does happen in late summer when the birds certainly do keep a low profile?

With breeding over and offspring fledged, there is no need to attract a mate or defend territory so song and display are no longer required.

Birds also need to recover and renew their feathers after the rigours of raising young. This can render them flightless for a period so they do not want to advertise their whereabouts and keep a low profile in the verdant summer foliage.

A recent question posed on a local on a Facebook group asked: "Where are all the male ducks?" The answer to that. . . they are in what is known as eclipse plumage in late summer where they are growing new feathers and just need to blend in for a while.

While the larger birds will predate smaller birds, raiding nests –and in the case of woodpeckers, breaking in to nest boxes, they will co-exist with the song/smaller birds, and increasing predator numbers often indicates greater numbers of available prey rather than less.

As for bird flu, it seems to affect sea birds, geese and poultry more than garden birds at present.

So just sit tight and as autumn arrives and the leaves fall, the birds will emerge with pristine new plumage, flocking together in feeding parties, coming together to roost – safety and warmth in numbers.

If you go out on a crisp autumn morning you may witness the migrating birds stopping off in our gardens, parks and countryside on their journey back to warmer climes to feed for the winter.

Redwings and Fieldfares from Scandinavia will add to the winter population, visiting our gardens for berries and fruit.

Robins have started singing their wistful winter song that they use to keep rivals away from their feeding ground.

As the natural food sources decline the birds will return to garden feeders in ever increasing numbers and so the cycle begins again.

There is no doubt that bird numbers are generally declining for a number of reasons, colonies of house sparrows bereft of food sources and nesting sites are a noticeable example, but the quiet time of late summer for birds has always been a period in the natural calendar.

**JL**

# ROWNEY GREEN IN BLOOM

VILLAGERS were given the chance to show off their green fingers, among other crafts and skills, at this year's annual Flower and Produce show, run by Rowney Green Horticultural Society.

Held in Rowney Green village hall, the entries to the various categories were laid out for the judges on the morning of the show.

The back room held the Arts, Crafts and Photography sections – a nice addition to the principal competition.

The event saw a good attendance of competitors, families and visitors, and special guest presenter Professor Sir Keith Porter congratulated all the winners, handing out trophies and certificates. Sir Keith was the civilian lead for the care of injured soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Rowney Green Horticultural Society chairperson Pat Davies said the day was "fantastic for our annual event, especially as we are celebrating our 80th show. We were privileged to have local resident Sir Keith with us and who was so personable with everyone he met."

A full list of the winners can be found on the society's website: www.rowneygreenhorticultural.co.uk

**Above:** Sir Keith sits with some of the young show winners.
**Left:** The Village hall fills with visitors and competitors exploring what's on offer.

The committee and judges gather outide the hall.

Sir Keith with the adult show winners.

Sir Keith hands out certificates.

**Clockwise from left:** Rachel Banner and Maureen Frotnely. Caren Battle with photography judge Keith Woolford. Chair Pat Davies thanks Sir Keith Porter. Felicity Rixon with her arrangement. Darcy Dunkers and her creation. A stunning rose. Jeni Burton with her trophy.

**Clockwise from top left:** A youngster receives a rosette. Roy Bennett's baked bean tin creation. Prize-winning vegetables. Domestic section judges Mary Tyson and Brenda Rainbow test the cakes.

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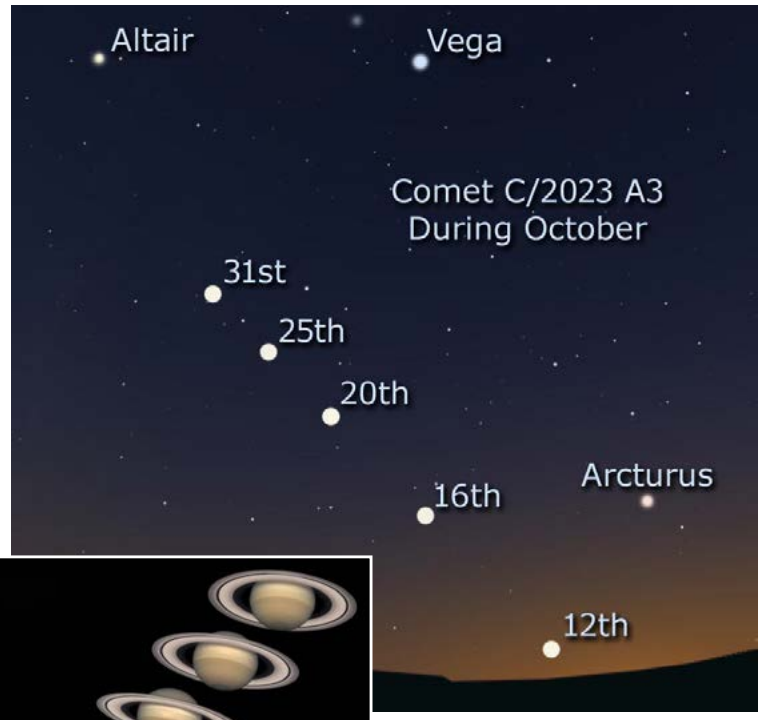
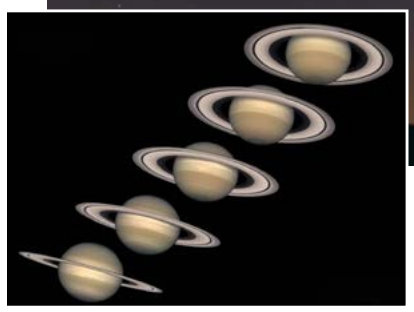
# NEGATIVELY BRIGHT

Amateur astronomer **Brian Watkiss** peers into the *Village* night sky.



**Above:** Spot the comet shoot above us this month.
**Left:** Views of Saturn from the Hubble telescope.

*Images courtesy of NASA.*

OCTOBER brings with it those chillier days and darker evenings but it means we can start skywatching earlier.

This October could prove to be very special as we just might possibly see a bright comet.

Now, I don't usually report comets but this one is unusual. Its name is (wait for it. . . !) C/2023 A3 Tsuchinshan-ATLAS and is known to be quite large and will pass fairly close to Earth during the month.

There were fears that it was about to break up as it approached the Sun but it seems to be holding together and – if it stays in one piece – will be at its closest on the 12th when it could have a brightness of zero.

That's right, zero. Let me explain. . . back in ancient history, the first stars to appear in the evening were given a brightness of one and the next ones two and so on. Then scientists later did some sums and made the scale start at zero.

Looking towards the southwest, high, almost overhead in our evening skies, the first star you will see will probably be Vega. Sure enough, this has a brightness or magnitude of zero.

As the sky darkens, Deneb will appear to its left with a magnitude of around one, to be joined by the other member of the Summer triangle, the slightly brighter Altair below. Lower down, towards the sunset in the west, the star Arcturus will appear which is also of magnitude zero but the glare of the Sun makes it harder to see.

Towards the end of the month, Venus will appear in the glow of sunset but only briefly each evening before it, too, sets just after the Sun. Being the brightest planet, Venus has a magnitude of minus four because planets weren't allowed for in the original scale. As a matter of interest, the Sun has a magnitude of –26 so don't look at that.

Our comet, when it appears out of the sunset on the 12th won't actually look as bright as Vega because stars are a point source of light whereas a comet is a bit of a fuzzy blob but it may be visible just below and to the left of Arcturus.

Start looking as soon as the Sun has disappeared at about 6.20pm. It will be visible for days after but will get less bright so look for it as soon as you can.

One object that is visible is Saturn, the strangest and loveliest planet when seen through a telescope and NASA has recently released some Hubble images showing how the angle of its rings changes during its orbit. It can be found below the Great Square of Pegasus, over in the south east. A really bright gibbous Moon will be close by on the 14th.

This is a good time of year to look out for the International Space Station which can have a magnitude of up to minus four so look out for it on heavens-above.com. It, too, is in the news at the moment because it has two extra people on board who were due to stay for eight days and now have to stay for eight months after their spacecraft had to leave without them.

My wife is concerned they may not have enough food and clean underwear!





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# 20 From TheVillage archive Years Ago

OUR OCTOBER 2004 cover showed a seasonal scene of the woods above Lickey Visitor Centre.

**IN THE NEWS:** A plan had been hatched to build a link road from the M42 at Hopwood to the Longbridge car plant, the redundant parts of which were already destined for retail, business and residential use. A consortium had been set up to look at the options, but Bromsgrove district councillor Jean Luck told Alvechurch Parish Council the road would "devastate the countryside and the area."

Meanwhile, the protest against plans for a rendering plant at Hopwood was gathering momentum, with a series of public meetings across the area.

**BLACKWELL AT** last had a village school bearing its name, as Linthurst First School in St Catherine's Road became Blackwell First School. The school also had a new logo designed by pupil Ella Smith-Carrington, pictured with Nathan Aktar and Nicholas Sfantzis.

**ALVECHURCH** youngster Courtney Hyde had set her sights on the 2012 Olympics after winning the British Youth Modern Pentathlon Championships. The 12-year-old beat 18 other girls across the five events: fencing, swimming, shooting, horse riding and cross country running.

# 10 From TheVillage archive Years Ago

OUR OCTOBER 2014 cover featured a young visitor to The Meadows in Alvechurch captivated by the serpent, newly carved by artist Andy DeComyn from a fallen black poplar. Out of picture was a giant apple carved from the same tree.

**CHEQUE IN:** Parish councillor David Matthews, Picnic in the Park committee member Louise Parkinson and parish councillor Natalie Wise present a cheque to Sally Meredith and Dean Morgan of The Lounge youth project in Alvechurch. The £558 was half the total raised by that year's picnic.

**DUCKY DILAPIDATION:** Clearance of the balancing pond at The Oakalls revealed the dire state of the duckhouse built by a resident ten years previously. District councillor Caroline Spencer appealed for residents to come to the ducks' aid by designing and building a new one.

**COUN** Janet King (left) presents Belinda and David Winroope "Best Medium Garden" award in Lickey & Blackwell Parish Council's Best Front Garden contest.

**SNAIL MAIL FAIL** ALVECHURCH parish councillors voted against a plan to bring their communications into the digital age and all all council paperwork, including minutes and agendas, would continue to be printed out and sent out to councillors by post.





## EVENTS

THE MIDLAND SINFONIA will re-start at 7.30pm on 5th October at St Laurence Church Alvechuch. The first concert in the 2024/25 season will be *EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED* an exciting programme to challenge expectations including: Pachelbel's 'Gigue' (the partner to the famous 'Canon'): Rossini's effervescent 'String Sonata No. 5' and Glazunov's 'Saxophone Concerto in E flat'. www.midlandsinfonia.co.uk

THE ASKLEPIOS ORCHESTRA conducted by Lee Armstrong, will give their Autumn Concert on Sunday evening, 24th November 2024, at 7pm, in St Andrew's Church, Barnt Green, B45 8NR. Their interesting programme is:- Wagner Overture 'The Mastersingers'; Debussy 'Suite de Danse' arranged by Lee Armstrong; and Symphony No.1 Kalinnikov. Admission is free, and donations to the retiring collection are much appreciated. You are invited to come along to support the orchestra and bring friends.
Save the Date of their Spring Concert, which will be on 13th April 2025 in the same venue.

## MUSIC

ALVECHURCH COMMUNITY CHOIR usually meets in Alvechurch Village Hall on Mondays at 7.30pm with occasional pub and outdoor sessions and a live stream. The choir is inclusive and open to everyone, whether you think you can sing or not. New members are always welcome. For more information or to join or book them, see their website www.alvechurchcommunitychoir.org.uk. They meet in the Village Hall on 7 and 21 October and have a pub session on 14 October. They are taking booking for Christmas!

BEOLEY VILLAGE HALL hosts live music, comedy, cinema and jazz nights. On Wednesday Jazz nights the bar opens at 7.45pm, with entertainment from 8.15pm. For Friday night events, the bar opens at 7pm with entertainment from 7.30pm, and on Saturdays the bar opens at 7.15pm with entertainment from 8pm. For more information and details, contact Paul on 07973 759340 or Richard 01527 66646. The programme is subject to change if the circumstances dictate.

BEL CANTO SINGERS, the well-known 4-part Worcestershire choir, rehearse at St. John's Church, Redditch B98 7PZ on Monday evenings.
They are always happy to welcome new singers. They have a very wide and varied repertoire and a huge catalogue to include pop, fun pieces, musical theatre, jazz, folk music and traditional choral and classical music along with much more. Bel Canto Singers are a friendly and social group, under the guidance of Musical Director, Liz Green and accompanist, Wendy Quirk. They are a non-profit making organisation and select a new charity each year to support both financially and with provision of their services. Just turn up at rehearsal on Mondays at 7.30pm where there will be a wide range of singing activities, light refreshments and chat. More information please contact Secretary Veronica Porter 07885 507899 or visit www.belcantosingers.org.uk

THE GEMINI Choir is seeking new singers. Info from Philip Morris on 07969 741137.

BLACKWELL Concert Band and Training Band is open to all brass and woodwind players of all abilities. To learn more about the band, book them, or find details of upcoming events, email blackwellconcertband98@gmail.com or visit www.blackwellconcertband.co.uk

SINGING For Health is a group aimed specifically at people with health problems, mental or physical. They meet on Thursdays 2-3pm at St Chad's Church, Rubery (£3 per session). Everyone is welcome!

# WHAT'S ON GUIDE

## CINEMA SCREENING: AN EVENING IN THE 1940s

**THE BROMSGROVE ARTRIX put on a special night to commemorate the Battle of Britain weekend with 1940s music from The Vintage Class singers, followed by a showing of locally made feature film *The Shamrock Spitfire* (The Vintage Class singers pictured above in RAF uniforms with the film makers and some of the cast members).**

**The film, which has won more than 50 awards, was shot in locations including Alvechurch, the Lickey Hills and Rowney Green, by Ian and Dominic Higgins from Hopwood and produced by Nigel Davey from Cofton Hackett and John Dawson from Hanbury.**

BROMSGROVE Music Centre runs FREE weekly string orchestra, concert band and beginner group Lift Off! sessions for young musicians. New members always welcome! Sessions are run by Severn Arts at The Orchards School, Bromsgrove, on Mondays 5.45–6.45pm Individual instrumental lessons are also provided at the centre. For info, see www.severnarts.org.uk/music-centre-groups

BROMSGROVE Folk Club meets on the second and last Thurs every month at Catshill Club 8pm. For a full list of events call Bob Bignell on 0121 476 5938 or see www.bromsgrovefolkclub.co.uk

BROMSGROVE Rock Choir offers everyone the chance to sing pop, rock and chart songs – no audition needed. Free taster sessions available. More info at www.rockchoir.com or on 01252 714276.

BROMSGROVE Community Choir meets on Thurs evenings, 6–7pm at Bromsgrove Methodist Church (main church hall). They sing for fun and enjoyment; everyone welcome, singers or not. Contact Ruth Henley for details on 01527 527022 or 07812 145267, or r.g.henley@btinternet.com

BARNT GREEN CHORAL SOCIETY meets in the Parish Centre behind St Andrew's Church, Sandhills Road, Barnt Green, on Mondays from 7.45 - 9.45pm. The choir sings a range of music throughout the year, performing at least three concerts. New singers are always welcome and there is no need to audition! For more information, see barntgreenchoralsociety.org or facebook.com/barntgreenchoralsociety.

## DANCING

JAZZ HEELS CLASS FOR ADULTS. A new class held on Tuesdays 5:45-6:30pm at Hopwood Village Hall. For more info contact Amy on 07979408997.

TANGO ARGENTINO at Barnt Green Quakers/ Friends Meeting House on Saturday mornings and Thursday evenings. For further information: www.facebook.com/groups/tango42/announcements (no Facebook account needed).

AELFGYTHE Border Morris is seeking new dancers (female) and musicians (male or female) to join them for fun, exercise and dancing. They meet at 7.45pm every Weds in Alvechurch Baptist Church Hall. Everyone welcome. Come and play traditional folk music, or try Morris dancing. For more details call Pam on 07961 830 831.

FRENCH & Breton folk dancing meets at Alvechurch Village Hall on the first Sat each month from 2.30–5pm (Please check first by emailing alvechurchfrenchdance@gmail.com). Informal tuition and live music provided. New dancers (and musicians) welcome. £2 per session.

SEQUENCE Ballroom and Latin dancing every Mon evening at 8pm at the Longbridge Social Club, 1012 Bristol Road South, Northfield. Occasional free tuition. All welcome to a friendly fun-filled dance. Details from Kalvin on 07725 265024.

ALVECHURCH Morris Men are on the lookout for new dancers and musicians. They practise on

***continues overleaf***

Mondays at Alvechurch Baptist Church Hall, 8.30–10pm, followed by a "debrief" at a local hostelry. They dance in local towns and at various local and national events, and perform a world-famous (sort of) mummers play in the village every New Year's Day. No ability, fitness or co-ordination required – if you are male, 18+ and prepared to spend more time than is probably good for you in public houses, pop along to meet the group!
Drop in to any practice, contact Steve on 07375 592928 or email: alvechurchbagman@gmail.com

NANCY Butterfly Morris Dancers dance in the North-West Morris style (clogs!) and practise at Catshill Methodist Church Hall on Monday evenings ready to meet up with other Morris sides for social events and festivals. They are very happy to welcome new adult dancers and musicians. See: www.nancybutterfly.co.uk or Facebook for what they get up to. You can contact them via the website or Jane on 07726 915289.

AVONCROFT Folk Dance Group enjoys anything from barn dances to ones seen in *Pride & Prejudice* or *Poldark*. All welcome, no need to have a partner. The group meets every Thurs from 8–10pm at Avoncroft Arts Centre, Redditch Road, Bromsgrove B60 4JR. £2.50 incl refreshments. Info from Liz Stanton on 01905 353995 or liz@the-stantons.uk or visit www.avoncroftfdg.weebly.com

BJ's BUSY Boots Line Dancing Classes: Tues 2–3pm Bromsgrove Leisure Centre; 7–10pm Stoke Prior Sports/Country Club. Thurs 1.15–3.30pm Bromsgrove Methodist Church Centre. Social Dance usually 1st Sat in month at All Saints Church Hall, Burcot Lane. It's a fun way to exercise. For more details phone Brenda on 01527 870151.

AMY GREAVES SCHOOL OF DANCE & Fitness offers a variety of classes for toddler up to adults. Based in Hopwood, Bournville and Longbridge. Contact 07979408997
amygreaves1@hotmail.co.uk
www.amygreavesschoolofdance.com

SEQUENCE dancing every Tuesday evening at 8pm at Fairfield Village Hall. Welcoming and friendly atmosphere, all levels welcome. For details please contact Joyce & Len on 0121 682 3266.

DANCE AND FITNESS at Bournheath Village Hall including Adult Zumba, Pilates and Stretch classes as well as KS1 and Baby Ballet. For more information message 'Dance With Nikki' on social media or n.foulkes@hotmail.co.uk

LINEDANCE CLASS, Thursdays 6pm - 7pm at Extracare Longbridge Village. Contact Bryan 07975569065 for details.

BEGINNERS LINEDANCE class, Tuesdays 6pm - 7pm at West Heath Community Centre, Hamstead House, B31 3QY. Contact Bryan 07975569065.

NEW SALSA dance classes, every Thursday at the Alvechurch Inn, B48 7LD. Doors open at 6pm. Beginners classes at 7pm, with the main class at 8pm. All classes are £9 each or both classes for £15. Come on your own or with friends. Contact 07779686679.

BALLROOM/LATIN SEQUENCE dance some line dance held on the first Friday of the month (check just in case of date change), 8pm -10.30pm at Extracare Longbridge Village, B31 2FZ. Contact Bryan 07975569065 for details.

DANCING POINTE offering RAD ballet classes age 3-18. Based at St Andrews first school, Barnt Green. Contact daningpointe@outlook.com.

## CLUBS, GROUPS & SOCIETIES

ST GODWALD'S Community Cafe meets every other Fri from 10am–noon at St Godwald's Room adjacent to the Church Hall, Finstall Road, Bromsgrove. Friendship, cake, tea/coffee. Donations welcome— monies to St Basil's charity for homeless youngsters. More info: david-rowe876@btinternet.com

BROMSGROVE Men In Sheds is a group for anyone (male or female) who has retired or been made redundant and wants to spend time with like-minded people. The group meets Mon–Thurs, 10am–2pm at Unit 1, Metals & Ores Industrial Estate, Stoke Prior B60 4JZ. You can find more information by calling 01527 570490 or email enquiries@ageukbrwf.org.uk

BARNT GREEN QUAKERS invite you to their film screenings. Admission is free however donations are welcome. Full details can be found at The Meeting House, 6 Sandhills Rd, Barnt Green. The upcoming films will be on 19th October 7pm: Angel & the Bad Man: Injured gun-fighter nursed back to health by Quaker nurse. And on Sunday 20 October 2.30pm: Highly acclaimed film, based on Martin Amis's novel, focusing on the life of Rudolf Höss and his family, who live next to the Auschwitz concentration camp.

PLACES OF WELCOME is a growing network of local community groups who provide their neighbourhoods with places where all people can feel safe and where they can connect, belong and contribute. The network is open in St Laurence Church and The Ark on Wednesdays 10.30am-12pm, all are open to everyone and offer friendship and hospitality, free refreshments and local knowledge about the neighbourhood. Visit www.placesofwelcome.org.uk or email info@placesofwelcome.org.uk

REDDITCH Military History Society usually meets monthly in St Luke's Church Hall (Evesham Road, Redditch, B97 4JX), 7 for 7.30pm. Info from Ron on 01527 545450 or ronnieg33b@hotmail.co.uk

FRIENDS Of Bittell Reservoirs is a group of local people interested in preserving the natural environment of the Site of Special Scientific Interest at Upper Bittell, Lower Bittell and Mill Shrub reservoirs, which are important staging posts for migrant birds and wildlife. If you have an interest in preserving this unique environment and would like to help in its preservation and maintenance, contact paul_and_carrol@live.co.uk

ALVECHURCH VILLAGE SOCIETY runs a regular programme of social events and guided walks, as well as maintaining local footpaths. Talks and social events are held in the Village Hall, unless otherwise noted. Entry at talks and AGM is free for members and £1 for guests, including a drink and biscuits. Litter picks start at 10am. Other social events are by ticket and details of venue, start time and price will be published by the organisers nearer the time. On Wednesday 16 October at 7:30pm, Dr Frank Ryding will be giving a talk "Working with the Red Cross in War Zones: Lighting a Candle".
The following talk will be on Nov 13th at 7:30pm "The history of Halloween" by Paul Harding.
On Sunday October 13th at 10am will be a Family litter picking session. Meet in the Village Square.

REDDITCH Community Shed is a project that encourages skills, combats loneliness, and provides a sense of worth in people who are retired or otherwise wondering what to do with themselves. They have a small woodworking work shop in the Kingfisher Centre just outside Primark and they are open Tuesday and Thursday mornings. Call in for tea and biscuits and a look round. More details at www.RedditchCommunityShed.co.uk or on FaceBook. If you're in Redditch of a Tuesday or Thursday they would be pleased to see you.

THE MONDAY Fellowship group meets at the Parish Centre behind St Andrew's Church in Barnt Green at 2.30pm on the second Monday every month; £3 to include tea and biscuits and an interesting talk. Info: Amanda Dauncey on 0121 445 5966.

INNER WHEEL Club of Redditch meet on 2nd Tuesday of the month at the Southcrest Hotel Redditch. An international Women's Organisation, they enjoy a bit of everything; walks, talks, days & evenings out, and everything in between whilst at the same time helping the community. Contact Anne Robertson for information 07580351361. Or email redditch.innerwheel@gmail.com or visit www.innerwheel.co.uk

BROMSGROVE U3A: No longer in full time work? Activity/interest groups and speaker meetings are happening throughout the month. Check website for more: www.u3asites.org.uk/bromsgrove/home
BROMSGROVE & Redditch Welcomes Refugees is a group of volunteers providing a range of support - from friendship and practical help - for all refugees and asylum seekers moving into the district. BRWR is open to all, irrespective of political or religious beliefs, and new volunteers are always needed. More info at brwr.uk

CATSHILL Carers and Bereavement Back Up Group specifically offers respite, socialising and occasional speakers to carers and bereaved in the area. It meets on the last Tues each month in the coffee bar area of Catshill Methodist Church Centre in Golden Cross Lane from 2.30pm for about 1.5hrs. All carers and bereaved welcome, as well as those who used to care for someone who has passed away or is now in a care facility. Tea and biscuits/cake provided – no charge.
Contact Di (0121 445 3595) for details and encouragement.

BROMSGROVE Speakers Club meets at The Bell at Belbroughton every other Tues, 7.45–10pm. Everyone who wants to gain confidence in public speaking is welcome, book in advance www.bromsgrovespeakers.org.uk.

RE-ENGAGE aims to help isolated elderly people by offering monthly tea parties where they can reconnect or make new friends in their own community. If you know of an elderly person who could benefit, please get in touch on 07539 276054. Guests need to be aged over 75 and living alone, and must be mobile enough to walk to a driver's car with assistance. Find info at www.contact-the-elderly.org.uk or on Facebook @ ContacttheElderlyRedditch

AGE UK Herefordshire and Worcestershire have a free Dementia Café at Finstall Village hall. It is a free social hub aimed at people with dementia, their families, and carers in Bromsgrove and the surrounding areas. It takes place every 2nd Wednesday of the month from 10.30am-12.30pm.

BROMSGROVE Photographic Society is a friendly, active and mutually supportive club for those keen to learn about, or improve, their photographic and digital imaging skills. The growing membership has skills ranging from novice to highly skilled, within wide-ranging subjects. The club meets on Tues nights, 8-10pm at Avoncroft Arts Centre. For more info, visit www.bromsgroveps.com or see Facebook.

ROTARY Club of Bromsgrove meets every 2nd Tues of the month at Maekong Thai Restaurant, and every 4th Tues at Bromsgrove School, both 7pm for 7.30pm. For more info www.bromsgroverotary.org.uk or contact Ron Pearce on 07703 567982.

HEART Of England Speakers is a friendly public speaking club, based in Solihull. It is affiliated to Toastmasters International, and meets on the 1st and 3rd Tues of each month, 7.30—9.30pm, at the Silhillians Sports Club and Events Centre. If you would like to boost your confidence get in touch via www.heartspeakers.org.uk, Instagram @toastmastersheartofengland, or via LinkedIn.

REDDITCH Rotary Club meets Monday lunchtimes at the Abbey Hotel, Redditch, B98 9BE. You would be very welcome to join in. Want to be involved, hear interesting speakers, and serve your community? Contact Peter Williams on 01527 60277.

LICKEY PHAB Club is a social club where people aged 14 and over, with and without disabilities, can come together each week to have fun! It is affiliated to national charity Phab. The club meets every Mon from 7.30–9.30pm at The Trinity Centre, Lickey Parish Hall to have fun, play games, do crafts or just chat – there's also a tuck shop! More info from Louise Boother on 07814 122990 or lickeyphabclub@hotmail.com

BEACON Ladies Club meets at 8pm on alternate Weds evenings at The Hawthorns Social Club, Rednal Hill Lane, Rednal. There is a varied programme of speakers and outings, including occasional visits to the theatre. New members of all ages welcome. £12 annual membership, plus £2 fortnightly. Call Barbara on 0121 445 3456 or Anita on 445 3770.

BARNT GREEN FRIENDSHIP CLUB meets every 2nd Tues of the month at 2.15pm at Burcot Grange. Visitors £3 to include tea and biscuits. Members 50p. Ladies and gents both welcome. For more details call Rosalind on 0121 445 0598.

THE WORCESTER-BIRMINGHAM & DROITWICH CANALS SOCIETY holds regular monthly meetings in the meeting room behind The Weighbridge Pub, Scarfield Hill, Alvechurch on the first Tuesday of the month at 7.45pm. There is usually a guest speaker. They promote the upkeep of the canals to ensure that the heritage is looked after for all to enjoy and are a registered charity. Find out more: www.wbdcs.org.uk or Facebook @wbdcs.org.uk. or email contact@wbdcs.org.uk. Non-members are welcome. Free entry.

ALVECHURCH WEDNESDAY CLUB's next meeting will be on 9 October, at the Cricket Club, at 1.30pm. This month is a very interesting talk and practical on the Japanese art of stitching, called Shashiko and a chance to have a little try yourselves. Come along and join in the fun, they are a friendly group and always happy to welcome new members and visitors to any meetings !

COFFEE, Cake and Chat is a place to meet new friends or catch up with old ones (with a dedicated baby area) on the 4th Friday of each month 10:30am-12pm at The Wheel, Blackwell. No charge, donations welcome. More info 0121 445 1425.

LICKEY Hills Local History Society meets monthly at 7.30pm in the Trinity Centre, Old Birmingham Road, Lickey B45 8ES. Annual subscription £15. Non-members £3 per meeting. Please email: info@lhlhs.org.uk or visit: www.lhlhs.org.uk

BROMSGROVE (1982) PROBUS Club provides opportunities for retired and semi retired men to meet socially. A members meeting is held at Avoncroft Arts Centre on the 3rd Wednesday monthly 10am until 12pm, including refreshments and a talk by a guest speaker. Other regular activities include monthly walks, lunches including partners, snooker--, social outings and IT. For more info visit www.bromsgrove1982probus.weebly.com or contact Martin on 07717 150136.

BROMSGROVE & Redditch Soroptimists meets every 2nd Thurs of the month at Burcot Village Hall. New members welcome – pop to a meeting, email sibrsoroptimist@gmail.com or ring 07812 985927.

ALVECHURCH Historical Society has a planned programme of talks on the first Monday of the month at 7.45pm at The Ark, St Laurence Church, Alvechurch. More details from Anne Humphries on 0121 445 5955.

KINGFISHER PROBUS Club of Redditch is recruiting retired and semi-retired men to join them in a friendly environment. They meet every 2nd Thurs of the month at 11.30am at the Court Leet,174 Worcester Road, Bromsgrove B61 7AY, with a short meeting at noon then lunch followed by an interesting talk given by a visiting speaker. Partners/friends welcome to join for walks, trips, golf, skittles and special lunches. Contact Chris Bailey on 01527 835802 for confirmation of date and venue. More info at www.kingfisherprobusredditch.co.uk

BROMSGROVE ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY meets on the 3rd Monday of each month at Bromsgrove Rugby Club. Doors open 7.30pm, speakers begin 7.45pm. Admission free on your first visit; refreshments available. Observing meetings are also held on the first Monday each month – bring your telescopes. More info via www.broms-astro.org.uk, www.facebook.com/bromsastro or emailing info@broms-astro.org.uk

ROTARY CLUB of Lickey Hills meets on Monday evenings, 7.15 for 7.30pm, at Hillscourt Conference Centre (NASUWT headquarters) on Rose Hill (B45 8RS). For details contact Graham Wiseman on 0121 460 1402.

SILVER THREADS, the Alvechurch club, meets on the first Weds each month at 2pm in Alvechurch Village Hall. You'll be sure of a welcome in this friendly atmosphere, where members can chat over a cup of tea. There are regular bingo sessions, and occasional days out. New members welcome. More info from Pat on 0121 447 8630.

WOODRUSH RUGBY Club "Old Dogs" meet at 8pm on the 2nd Thurs in the month at the Clubhouse, Icknield Street, 01564 822878. Open to all former players, social members and old friends for a social chat and reminisce over a glass of beer. Join us: call Mike Betts on 07960 303254 or visit www.woodrushrfc.co.uk or info@woodrushrfc.co.uk

The North Worcestershire Association of the NATIONAL TRUST hold monthly meetings with interesting speakers on 3rd Thursday 7.30pm at Tardebigge Community Hall, also walks, outings and an annual holiday. For further info email Ros257@yahoo.co.uk

Bromsgrove & District AMATEUR RADIO CLUB meets every Friday evening from 7.30pm at Avoncroft Arts Centre. The club is open to anyone with an interest in Amateur Radio. More details from the secretary Alan on 07886 000052 or secretary@bromsgroveradioclub.co.uk

COMMUNITY COFFEE morning - open to all. Free refreshments and chat. Wednesdays 10-12 at Barnt Green Baptist Church. Enquiries can be made to: events@bgb.org.uk

THE MACULAR Society Barnt Green Support Group meets on the last Fri of the month (with some exceptions) at The Parish Centre, behind St Andrew's Church, Barnt Green, B45 8NR, 2–4pm. Friendly, self-help group, proving there is more to life than this devastating eye condition. New members always welcome. For more info, ring Wendy on 0121 445 1585 or Alan on 01527 877864.

REDDITCH CHESS CLUB meets at Alvechurch & Hopwood Cricket Club, Birmingham Road, Alvechurch B48 7TA, every Wednesday at 7.15pm September - May. The club has teams playing in both Birmingham and Worcester leagues. New players are welcome - just turn up or contact Giles Stanton on 07932 053621 or David Smith on 07540 304620.

## SPORT, FITNESS & HEALTH

UPTON WARREN SAILING CLUB sails throughout the year at Aztec (Upton Warren) opposite Webb's Garden Centre, Wychbold. A small, friendly club with both mixed fleet racing and cruising sessions. Most members sail their own boats but there are also club boats available for members to use. See www.uwsc.co.uk to find out more or contact membership@uwsc.co.uk

JOOLISM HIIT CLASSES. Semi-PT resistance training for ladies only in a well-equipped gym in Bromsgrove. For ladies who want toned and strong bodies. Attendance must be pre-booked via julie@joolismfitness.co.uk

WOODRUSH RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB, Icknield Street, Alvechurch, B38 0EL is recruiting: Senior (Men & Ladies) U17 Colts Mini/Junior & Micros. Call 07341 256821 for recruitment or 01564 822878 (Clubhouse) email info@woodushrfc.co.uk or see: www.drushrfc.co.uk Facebook @WoodrushRFC

ALVECHURCH VILLAGE SOCIETY'S WALKS are held at 2pm of the first Sunday of the month unless noted otherwise. For walks starting outside the village, please contact the walk leader if you need a lift. Occasionally, weather conditions mean that a walk must be cancelled at late notice: check with the leaders or the AVS website if unsure. Always wear appropriate footwear.
Contact walks organiser Tony Brannon for more information about the walks: avswalks@gmail.com.
The next walk will be on Sunday Oct 6th at 2pm; "A Leisurely Walk Through The Lickeys". Meet at Lickey Hills Visitor Centre B45 8E. It will be led by Alice Wilkinson & Joan Feely 07902 618397.
The following walk will be "A Walk Around Alvechurch" on Sun Nov 3rd at 2pm led by Tony Brannon 07763 468893. Meet at Alvechurch Station steps B48 7SD

BARNT GREEN FISHING CLUB controls the fishing (both game and coarse) on the Bittell Reservoirs. Contact: barntgreenfishingclub@gmail.com or Facebook @Barnt Green Fishing Club.

REDDITCH & Bromsgrove Company of Archers meet April–Sept, Mon 6.30pm and Fri 6.30pm at Meadow Park Football Ground (by Harris Brush Works – outdoors) and Oct–March on Fri 6.30pm at Studley Leisure Centre (indoors). New members welcome (juniors from 8 years old, seniors from 18 to 80+, seasoned archers or absolute beginners). Beginners' courses run throughout the year or taster sessions by appointment. Further info from rbcoaCoach@gmail.com, rbcoasecretary@gmail.com, or www.redditcharchers.org

REDDITCH Ramblers is a growing, friendly and sociable group offering a full walks programme including walks every Sat and Sun and a midweek walk most weeks. Sun walk is usually 6–9 miles; the Sat walk is more challenging, usually 10–12 miles. Midweek walks vary, sometimes morning walks followed by option of lunch or full day walking. The Saturday Strollers walk fortnightly (4–5 miles). Newcomers are always welcome and can walk three times with the group before deciding if they want to join. The group also arranges holidays, coach trips and social events throughout the year. Full info at redditch.ramblers@gmail.com or www.redditchramblers.org.uk

PHYSIOTHERAPY-LED Pilates Classes in Cofton Hackett, Barnt Green and Lickey Hills. Mixed ability Daytime and Evening classes available. Mother & Baby classes also run by Women's Health Physiotherapists. Small and welcoming classes aimed to improve balance, muscle tone and posture as well as overall body strength. Contact Elizabeth on 07850 604425 or elizabethalexanderltd@gmail.com or see www.elizabethalexanderphysiotherapy.com

CLUBBERCISE@ Alvechurch: Get sweat and glow! Get ready for exercise in disguise. You'll be dancing yourself happy and sweating until you sparkle, without even realising it. Mondays 7.30–8.30pm at Alvechurch School. All places MUST be pre-booked via www.leeshfitness.co.uk or 07541 625939.

POUND FITNESS@ Alvechurch: Channel your inner rockstar with this full body cardio-jam session. Using Ripstix®, lightly-weighted drumsticks engineered specifically for exercising, POUND transforms drumming into an incredibly effec-

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tive way of working out. Weds 7.30–8.15pm at Alvechurch School. All places MUST be pre-booked via www.leeshfitness.co.uk or 07541 625939.

MEDITATION CLASSES for Everyone. Come and try a KIND approach to Meditation and experience for yourself the revitalising power of a relaxed, calm, clear mind, whether beginner or experienced practitioner. Classes with community and an experienced teacher, at The Ark, Alvechurch, online or a mixture. REDUCE STRESS, FEEL CALMER, SLEEP BETTER. To join us for a trail contact Sally: www.MyYogaMind.co.uk, classes@MyYogaMind.co.uk, 07903 663085, F Sally My Yoga Mind

BARNT GREEN Sailing Club offers regular sailing, either racing or casual sailing, in beautiful surroundings at Upper Bittell reservoir. For info contact secretary@bgsc.uk or see www.sailing-barntgreen.com

BRIAR Rose Field Archers is a field archery club based near Bromsgrove. There are two qualified coaches for those interested in taking up the sport. Contact briarrosefieldarchers@gmail.com

YOGA Really Works: classes on Thurs evenings (term-time only), 7–8pm at Cotteridge Quaker Meeting House, Watford Road. Six-week blocks £45. Slow and mindful rhythmic movement in time with the breath. Accessible venue—classes open to wheelchair uses and less abled persons. Contact George on 07490 781637 or yogareallyworks@outlook.com, see www.yogareallyworks.co.uk or on Facebook @Yogareallyworks

THE RAMBLERS Bromsgrove Group: Guided walking with our group for pleasure, fitness and fun. Full programme of walks / events throughout the year. More info at www.bromsgroveramblers.webs.com or call Martin on 01527 857117 or Peter on 01527 558203.

ALVECHURCH WALKING Buddies: join a regular local walk with like-minded people who simply want to go on a local, sedate and friendly walk with no pressure. Well-behaved owners and their dogs are very welcome. The group meets at 10.30am every Thurs. For more info, search for 'alvwb' on Facebook or contact Tony on 07763 468893.

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL run a series of weekly health walks around Bromsgrove and its districts. The walks are usually steady in pace and led by qualified walk leaders, and free to attend. Walks are often followed by guided sessions on the park gym equipment. Blackwell Gentle Walk, Wednesdays, 10.30am, start opposite the entrance to St. Catherine's Church. Lickey End Walking for Health, Tuesdays, 10am, meet at Lickey End Recreation Ground car park. Oakalls and Harwood Park Health Walk, Wednesdays, 2pm, meet at The Oakalls Play Area. Sanders Park Walk, Mondays, 9.50am for 10am start, meet at the café kiosk near the car park. There are three options: Short (30mins), Medium (2-3miles in 60-75mins), and Fast (3+ miles in 60mins). Bromsgrove Rural Walk, Fridays, 9.45am for 10am departure, meet in the Sanders Park car park extension. These rural walks vary between 4 and 7 miles and can involve driving, a system of car sharing has been established. Stoke Heath Health Walks, Thursdays, 10.30am, meet at Stoke Heath Recreation Ground.

SOCIAL TENNIS takes place at Rubery Community & Leisure Centre, Holywell Lane, Rubery B45 9AD on Mondays from 11.30–2.30pm. The group would welcome a few more players – just turn up or ring Keith on 0121 445 5094.

SARACEN Cycling Club is seeking new members. Men, ladies, beginners, and regular riders are all welcome. The long-established club meets regularly by the Tardebigge Pub on Thurs at 10am and Sun at 9.45am. See www.saracenroadclub.com or call Ivor on 0121 453 2287.

LONGBRIDGE Cycling Club meets weekly on Tues and either Sat or Sun. Ride pace generally at 9-11mph overall average, varied distances. Hotel and hostel weekends away, cycle camping adventures, social outings and much more. All ages, beginners, and seasoned cyclists all welcome. Call or text Deb on 07738 982161, email debweston@aol.com or see www.longbridgecyclingclub.com or Facebook @longbridgecyclingclub

MERCIAN NORDIC WALKING: come and try a taster session for fun, fitness and friendship. More info at www.merciannordicwalking.co.uk Online fitness and personal training available at www.mercianfitness.co.uk

PILATES PILATES with Steff Affleck (Rowney Green) Mat classes, apparatus (reformer/ tower / barrels etc.) 1:1 and duets. Irrespective of age, gender, health or fitness we could all benefit from understanding more about how to keep moving well. Joseph Pilates' system of exercise, using apparatus he invented, enables you to challenge what is strong, build what is weaker, exploring how you can balance the body to move away from pain and discomfort towards greater resilience and independence. Graduate of Pilates Professional Advanced Teacher Training; teaching Pilates for 17 years. Call 07759590830 or see www.steffaffleck.co.uk

BARNT Green Sports Club (Margesson Drive, Barnt Green, B45 8LR) offers racquet sports in a friendly environment, plus running and cycling groups. Clubhouse with licensed bar. More info from Nick Butcher on 0121 445 1978 or visit www.barntgreensportsclub.co.uk

CATSHILL FC offers youth coaching sessions each Saturday morning at Catshill Middle School, Meadow Road, Catshill, B61 0JW. Boys and girls from Reception age upwards are welcome. Contact Gary on 07462 118920 or see www.catshillfc.co.uk for further info.

BROMSGROVE & REDDITCH Badminton Club welcomes players for social and league play. Playing Sunday evenings 5.40 to 7.40pm. Details from Steve Whittaker 07805 051456.

PILATES with Lottie Newberry: Physiotherapy-led Pilates classes every Monday in Alvechurch in the day and Barnt Green in the evening. Contact Lottie on lottienewberrypilates@hotmail.com. All abilities welcome.

ACTIVE SENIORS Exercise Classes at Alvechurch Village Hall, run by Bromsgrove council on Fridays starting 9.15am, £5 per class. Contact g.peart@hotmail.co.uk or call on 07828 515344 for info.

YOGA for Every-Body. Come and try a fresh approach to Yoga, that works with your body rather than against it. A slow-paced, yet powerful Yoga for EveryBody, whether beginner or experienced, flexible or wishing you were. Classes with community and an experienced teacher, at The Ark, Alvechurch, Blackwell First School, online or a mixture. MOVE BETTER, BE CALMER, FEEL GREAT! To trial a class, contact Sally: www.MyYogaMind.co.uk, classes@MyYogaMind.co.uk, 07903 663085, F: Sally My Yoga Mind

TAI CHI (Qigong) sessions in Alvechurch Village Hall on Mon 10–11am and Friday 10.30. Qigong is an integration of physical postures, breathing techniques, and focused intentions. More details Robert Hawkesford (Bob) on 07788856642 or email rhawkesford59@gmail.com

FIVE WAYS Old Edwardians' Cricket Club at Ash Lane, Hopwood: Junior, Men's and Women's teams, come and join in! Excellent facilities. Everyone welcome. Coaching for juniors on Fri evenings May to Aug. Contact Mark Tovey on 01527 835031.

NEW Ravens (North East Worcestershire Ravens Rugby League Club) based at Forshaw Heath Lane, Portway, B94 5LH. Junior training and 'little leaguers' take place on Sun mornings from 10.30am, with open-age and touch on Weds evenings from 7pm. All welcome at this family-orientated club. Contact Gail on 07515 020844 or Jason on 07957 248464 visit www.newravens.net

KINGS Norton Rhinos offers contact and non-contact rugby for children from Reception to Year 12. A safe and friendly introduction to rugby – and plenty of outdoor fun and exercise! Training takes place at KNRFC Ash Lane, Hopwood, on Sundays from 9.30–11.30am. Contact Simon Thompson on 07968 424585 or visit www.knrfc.co.uk

HOPWOOD Ladies Cycling Club meets at Hopwood Playing Field on Tuesdays at 11.30am and Wednesdays at 9.30am. For information, visit www.hopwoodladiescyclingclub.co.uk or email Sheila Evans on fairf8@yahoo.co.uk.

MARTIAL ARTS Kickboxing/Karate at The Ark Tuesdays 6.30-7.30. For more information please visit www.forcecombatmartialarts.co.uk

SLIMMING WORLD at Cofton Village Hall, on Wednesdays 9:30am, 5:30pm and 7:30pm.

ASSERTIVENESS AND HELPING SKILLS DONINGTON TRAINING at Alvechurch Village Hall. Easy, enjoyable and effective learning. Wednesdays, pay what you think and can afford, any profits go to The Village Hall. http://tinyurl.com/DTcdates or John Talbut (0121) 445 4607.

6 WEEK MEDITATION & MINDFULNESS COURSES to help you relax, find inner peace, and elevate your life. Join them on Wednesday evenings at The Friends Meeting House in Barnt Green or online whenever it suits you. Suitable for everyone! Enrol in the upcoming courses and discover how they've been changing lives at www.MeditationWithCoz.com or contact Coz at 07770067349. Follow on Facebook/Instagram: @MeditationWithCoz.

BARNT GREEN CHUGGERS & CHAINGANG provide run & cycling sessions for mixed abilities, those wanting to stay in shape plus those wishing to improve their running, cycling & fitness all in a social & recreational environment. Club Sessions - Chuggers (run) Monday & Wednesday 7pm and Chaingang (cycling) Wednesday 7pm & Saturday 9am all from Barnt Green Sports Club. For more info or to arrange a trial session please contact kategallimore@googlemail.com

GENTLE EXERCISE CLASSES working on mobility, strength, flexibility and balance. Classes are very welcoming and inclusive and are held on: Wednesday's 1.30-2.30 at St Stephens Church Hall, Rednal and Thursdays 10am-11am Blackwell Community Hall, Blackwell. The cost is £5 per class. For information call Lorraine 07866877881

LEGS, BUMS AND TUMS every Thursday morning at The Parish Centre at 9.15am at £6 per class. All abilities welcome. Contact Natasha on 07828890774 or natasha.atkinson5@sky.com for more information.

KEEP FIT by Exercising to Music! Every Monday morning at 10am and Thursday morning at 10.15am at The Friends Meeting House. £6 per class pay as you go. All abilities welcome. Contact Natasha on 07828890774 or natasha.atkinson5@sky.com for more information.

## GARDENS & FLOWERS

BLACKWELL COMMUNITY GARDEN in the grounds of St Catherine, Blackwell. Pop along to help water, plant and harvest. Info on 0121 445 1425.

ROWNEY GREEN HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY meet at The Village Hall on the second Thursday of each month at 7.25pm. On 10th October they welcome speaker, Bob Brown and his topic is "Unusual Winter Plants". Bob has a life-long obsession with hardy perennials widened and much honed since he started his nursery Cotswold Garden Flowers 32 years ago. Bob writes for various periodicals including a monthly series in Gardening Which and is a regular return speaker. He's holder of the Veitch Memorial Medal awarded for the science and advancement of horticulture. Guests are welcome £3.50 including coffee and biscuits. For more information please contact Lindsay Smith on 01527 592874.

DODFORD GARDENING CLUB meets on the 2nd Monday each month (except August) usually in Dodford Village Hall at 7.45pm. New members and visitors welcome. More info at www.dodfordgardeningclub.co.uk or call Penny on 07706 153618.

BROMSGROVE FLOWER CLUB holds regular monthly meetings on the 3rd Thursday of each month. Meets at 2pm, at All Saints Church Hall, Burcot Lane, Bromsgrove B601AF. A yearly membership is available or come as a visitor. Refreshments & then a demonstration of flower arrangements and a raffle. Further information on 07843758489 .

## ART, CRAFT & LITERATURE

THE WITHYBED POETS are local people who write poetry and share and discuss it with each other. You don't have to live in Withybed Green, though most of their meetings are there.
They meet regularly every six weeks or so. They like to read to local audiences and some of them write "poetry on request." For details of next meeting and more information contact marygreen5005@gmail.com.

PAINTING & DRAWING If you enjoy painting and drawing, try this friendly community group meeting in the Rubery Leisure Centre, Holywell Lane, on Monday mornings, 9am-1pm, for all ages and abilities. The facilities are excellent for both indoor and outdoor working depending on personal preference and weather conditions. Tea and coffee is provided. For information: 0121 453 7716 (Fridays).

THE "CRAFTY LADIES" craft group meets every Monday morning in Alvechurch Library from 10am–1pm, with knitting, crocheting, sewing, quilting etc. More info on 01905 822722.

BURCOT WOODTURNING CLUB offers a friendly meeting place for woodturners of all abilities and experience. A varied programme includes demos, talks, hands-on practical evenings and visits to exhibitions. The group meets on the first Thurs each month, 7.15–9.30pm at Burcot Village Hall. Visit www.burcotwoodturners.org.uk

ALVECHURCH LIBRARY is available to host day and short courses such as card-making or scrapbooking. If you have a skill to teach or share and would like to rent a space, call the Hub on 01905 822722 and ask for Alvechurch Library.

AVONCROFT ARTS SOCIETY at Avoncroft Arts Centre (Redditch Road, Bromsgrove B60 4JR), runs tutored/ non-tutored classes in Art, Textiles, Ceramics, Embroidery and Dance. Contact AAS on 01527 833829 or avoncroftarts@btconnect.com

ALVECHURCH ART GROUP meets at the Baptist Hall (rear of church) every Tues from 1–3.30pm, using all mediums except oil. All welcome, especially beginners. Friendly tuition. Call Paul on 0121 445 5437 or drop in.

ALVECHURCH LIBRARY Readers Group meets in the library on the first Thursday of the month from 2pm–3pm. New members welcome. Don't forget that you can access online audio and e-books 24/7, free of charge, by downloading the Borrowbox app. Visit www.worcestershire.gov.uk/libraries

LICKEY HILLS ART SOCIETY, a friendly bunch of artists and those interested in art, meet at Longbridge Methodist Church, Bristol Road, B45 9TY, on the first Sat each month at 7.30pm. Open to artists and non-artists alike. For more info email Lyn lyndasharp2010@yahoo.com or come along – the members would love to see you.

SEW TOGETHER meets on Tuesday mornings from 9.15am to 12.15pm and Tuesday afternoons from 12.30pm to 3pm during term time at the new Cofton Village Hall. They meet weekly to sew and socialise. All abilities are welcome and there are a variety of sewing machines to borrow if required. For more information contact Avril on sewtogether64@gmail.com or see Sew Together Cofton Hackett on Facebook.

BARNT GREEN ART CLUB meets at Barnt Green Scout and Guide Headquarters in Blackwell Road just beyond the Barnt Green Social Club. They run Tuesday morning and afternoon sessions with visiting tutors at 2 - 3 week intervals. Interested artists of all abilities are welcome. Please phone Jackie on 0121 445 4745 for details.

MARLBROOK QUILTERS meet on the 1st Wednesday of the month at Avoncroft Arts Centre, Redditch Road, Stoke Heath, Bromsgrove B60 4JR. They are a small friendly group who would like to welcome new members. For more information contact Maggie Forknell 07973 313034 or Sheila Nunnerley 0121 445 2238.

THE SEASONS ART CLASS is an art course where you can discover your inner artist. Perfect for absolute beginners to improvers. Classes held at Rowney Green Village Hall, Bournheath Village Hall & Ullenhall Village Hall. Get in touch to find out more by emailing seasonsartredditch@outlook.com.

KINGS NORTON PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY meet at The Tennis Club, Grange Hill Road, Birmingham B38 8RE. For information contact Dave Wall Tel: 0121 458 2562, email: dave.walluk@virgin.net

FORGE MILL CREATIVE TEXTILE GROUP are a friendly group of enthusiastic local stitchers, both experienced and beginners. They meet on Friday mornings at Beoley Village Hall. They are a leisure learning and development group exploring various techniques and media to create textiles artwork. Please contact Lynda on 0121 445 3212 or Janet on 0121 445 4335 for more information.

## CHILDREN & FAMILIES

BABY Bounce & Rhyme is at Alvechurch Library Mondays 10–10.30am. Sing-a-long to traditional nursery rhymes and action songs.

STORYTIME at Alvechurch Library is on Tuesdays 11–11.30. Silly stories and tall tales for pre-school children to enjoy with parents and carers.

CURIOUS CUBS: An outdoor playgroup promoting nature and learning through play. Sessions run on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays for walkers to five years. Based at Barnt Green Sports Club, Margesson Drive, B45 8LR. Visit www.curiouscubs.co.uk for more infomation and to book your place.

DRAMA TOTS: Award-winning imaginary play classes for children 18 months to 5 years.
Classes run term-time on Monday mornings in Alvechurch/Fridays in Barnt Green (other days/ venues available). Contact Jo 07738 969460 for details.

TINY CHURCH (stay and play for under-5s and carers) meets in Holy Trinity Church, Lickey, each Weds from 11.15am–12.30pm during term times. Games, toys, snacks and stories, and a time to meet together with God. Just pop along, or contact 0121 445 1425 clive.rushton@btinternet.com

THE NATIONAL CHILDBIRTH TRUST (NCT) runs popular antenatal and postnatal courses to grow your knowledge and network, feel prepared and confident moving into the next chapter of your life. Discover and learn with other local parents-to-be, make life-long friends in your community. Held at St Andrew's Church, Barnt Green. www.nct.org.uk/courses-workshops or call 0300 330 0700.

SOLIHULL BABY MASSAGE is at Rowney Green Village Hall on Tuesdays. A relaxed environment for parents and babies to bond through massage. Visit www.solihullbabymassage.co.uk

RHYTHM TIME is a fun, award-winning developmental music classes for the under 5's. Classes in Alvechurch, Barnt Green, Bromsgrove, Redditch and lots more. Contact Vicky 07712 675 697 or visit www.rhythmtime.net

NEW ROAD PARENTS SUPPORT for parents of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans children meets monthly in Bromsgrove. A confidential, voluntary, small support group for parents by parents. Close links with FFLAG. Visit www.newroadparents.org, email newroadparents@gmail.com or Facebook @ New Road Parents Lgbtqi+ Support Group.

THEATRETRAIN Bromsgrove, performing arts for children 4-18yrs. Saturdays 10.30am-1.30pm. For a half-price trial email bromsgrove@theatretrain.co.uk or call 07766 724834.

TUTORING both online and in-person for Maths KS1 and KS2. English KS1 through to GCSE. For more information message 'Tutoring with Penny' on Facebook or email penny_foulkes@hotmail.co.uk

PRE-SCHOOL BALLET - Pre-school (2 ½ - 4 yrs) ballet held at Barnt Green Baptist Church on Monday mornings from 10am. Contact dancingpointe@outlook.com for further details.

STAY & PLAY for under 5s and their carers running each Thursday from 9:30-11:30am during term time at Barnt Green Baptist Church, Bittel Road. Just pop along for play, singing & story time. Email familypastoral@bgb.org.uk

Blackwell Stay & Play meets on Mondays during term time at Blackwell Community Hall. All under 5s and their carers are welcome from 9.30am – 11am

## WOMEN'S INSTITUTES

FINSTALL CROSS WI meets at Finstall Village Hall on the second Tuesday of the month at 7.30pm. For more info see www.finstallcrosswi.org or email finstallcrosswi@gmail.com

BEOLEY WI meets on the first Tuesday of each month in Beoley Village Hall at 7pm. More info from Joan Lovett on 01527 584047 or email beoleysec@wfedwi.org.uk

BENTLEY PAUNCEFOOT WI meets at 7pm on the second Tuesday every month between April and November, and at 12pm December to March, at Bentley Village Hall (B97 5TB). More information from Helen Spence (01527 822622)or email bentleypauncefootsec@wfedwi.org.uk

BARNT GREEN WI meets at the Baptist Church at 7.30pm on the 3rd Thursday of the month. For more information: Sheila Nunnerley 07465 439646.

ALVECHURCH WI meets on the second Monday each month in Alvechurch Village Hall, at 7.30pm. For more information email Lin Neal lin.neal@hotmail.com or alvechurchpres@wfedwi.org.uk

LICKEY WI usually meets on the first Tues every month at 7.30pm in the Parish Hall (Trinity Centre), Old Birmingham Road, Lickey. More info from Jenny Ryder on 0121 445 1872, Lickeywi@gmail.com or www.lickeywi.wordpress.com

HILLSIDE AT ALVECHURCH WI meets at 7.45pm on

***continues overleaf***

the first Weds each month at The Ark, Alvechurch. For more information contact Marian Clemons on 07586354826 or follow them on Facebook: Hillside WI at Alvechurch

BLACKWELL & BURCOT WI meets at Burcot Village Hall on the second Weds each month, at 2pm. For info call President Mrs Barbara Knight on 0121 445 3456.

HOPWOOD WI meets at Hopwood Village Hall on the first Thurs of the month at 7.30pm. For more information call Ann Thurrell on 0121 447 7668.

ST CATHERINE'S BLACKWELL WI meets on the 3rd Wednesday each month at 7.30pm at Burcot Village Hall. Contact Sue Barrett for more information on 01527 596092 or susanbarratt222@gmail.com

RUBERY WI meets on the 2nd Weds of the month at 7.30pm at Beacon Church Centre, when there are speakers, activities and competitions. The 4th Weds of each month is the craft evening. Non-members are welcome. Contact Judie1055@yahoo.co.uk 07810765314.

FAIRFIELD WI meet at Fairfield village hall on the second Wednesday of the month at 7pm. For further details contact Carol Hine at fairfieldwi1932@gmail.com

## VILLAGE VENUES FOR HIRE

HOPWOOD VILLAGE HALL is available for hire for parties, groups and gatherings. Please contact Booking Secretary Ann Thurrell on 0121 447 7668 or visit www.hopwoodvillagehall.co.uk

TARDEBIGGE COMMUNITY HALL for hire: large, bright facility for functions, clubs, societies and all activities. To book call 07763 446902 or email tchbookings@gmail.com

THE WHEEL COMMUNITY ROOM IN BLACKWELL has daytime, evening and weekend availability for one-off and regular hire. Call 0121 445 1425.

THE TRINITY CENTRE IN LICKEY has evening and weekend availability for one-off and regular hire – more info on 0121 445 1425.

BARNT GREEN PARISH CENTRE has large and medium sized lounges available for regular hire for some morning and early afternoon sessions each week. Please contact the Parish Administrator on 0121 447 7097.

THE ARK AT ST LAURENCE has a large hall and kitchen, and smaller upper room for hire, for one-off and regular hires. More information and bookings please call 0121 447 7955 or email admin@thearkalvechurch.co.uk

ALVECHURCH VILLAGE HALL is available for hire to groups, clubs, societies, and private parties. The hall has a stage, PA system, kitchen and bar area. There is also a smaller conference room available for hire. Enquiries to the Hall Manager Andrea Ottley on 07455892909 or hallmanager.avh@gmail.com

ALVECHURCH CRICKET CLUB PAVILION is available for hire: weekdays for community groups/clubs/societies, evening functions/private parties. Licensed bar, dance floor, kitchen area and great outdoor space. Enquiries to Stuart Brereton via 07775 714165 or ahcc.bar@gmail.com

FAIRFIELD VILLAGE HALL is available to hire for functions, groups and parties. It has a large hall with kitchen facilities. Contact the booking secretary Andrew on 07762749943 or bookings@fvh.org.uk. See website for details www.fvh.org.uk

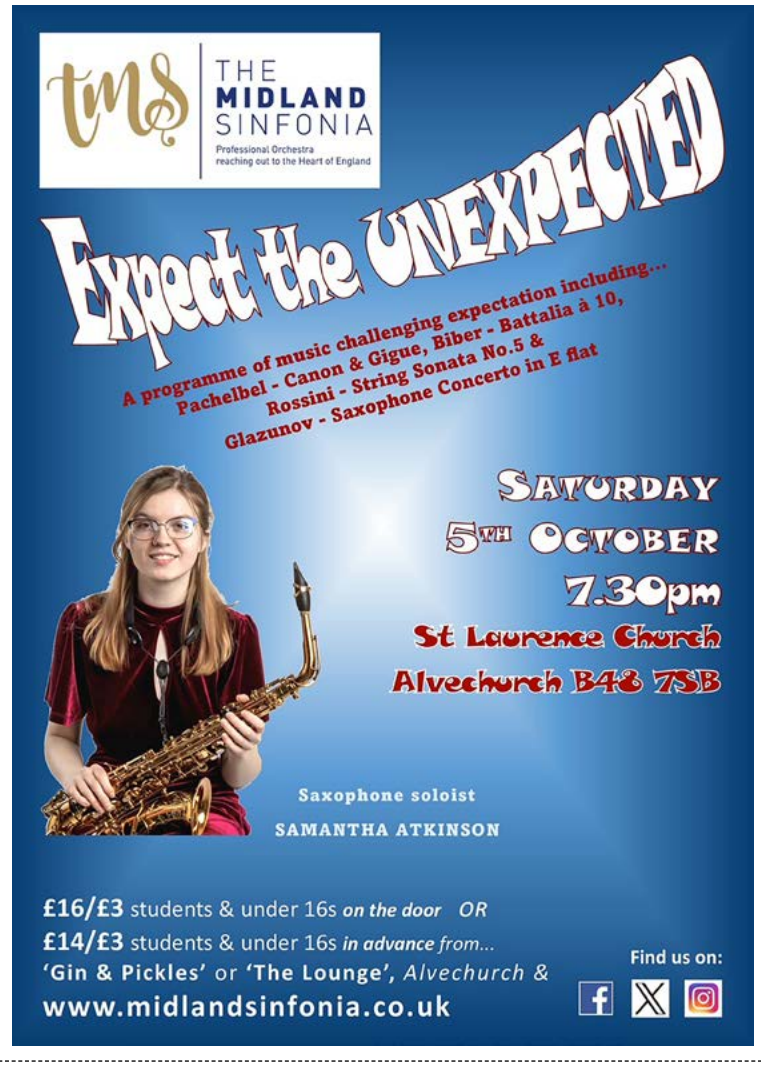
ROWNEY GREEN VILLAGE HALL has a large hall, with stage and sprung floor (ideal for dance and exercise) and two smaller rooms. Available for one off or regular hire, ample parking. Email: admin@rowneygreenvillagehall.org

BLACKWELL COMMUNITY HALL is available for groups, functions and parties. The large hall is complemented by a new kitchen and a grassed area. Details at blackwellcommunityhall.co.uk.

BEOLEY VILLAGE HALL has a wide range of facilities, including a modern kitchen, bar, PA system, projector and screen, skittles alley and a large car park with disabled access to the hall. To book your event, meeting, party or celebration for up to 100 people, please contact Richard on 01527 66646.

THE BOATHOUSE VENUE is set in the unique location of Upper Bittell and is available to hire for Weddings, Private Parties, Wakes, Meetings, Workshops and Group Gatherings. It offers a fully equipped kitchen and licensed bar. For enquiries, email boathouse.bgw@gmail.com.

OUR LADY'S PARISH CENTRE in Rednal is available for hire for clubs, groups, classes, private parties etc Large hall with kitchen and car park. Enquiries to olhallbooking@gmail.com or 0121 453 3452.




## FEATURE IN WHAT'S ON

**If you would like to feature your group or event in *The Village* What's On section, the deadline for the November issue is 10 October 2024. info@villageonline.co.uk**

## CHANGES TO THE WHAT'S ON

**Our What's On section is getting a bit crowded. Please be aware that from February 2025 there may be some changes to the What's On. Keep an eye out for updates.**

**Composure: Dan Shaw (left) slots the ball home on debut against Halesowen to put Alvechurch top of the table – and gets some big hugs from his team-mates (right).**

**Pictures by: *Ian Macvie.***

# Church go on a run

ALVECHURCH FC shrugged off disappointment at being dumped out of the FA Cup by chalking up three 1-0 league victories taking the team to the top of the table.

Hopes of repeating the 2022-23 FA Cup run were snuffed out in Leicestershire on the last day of August, but this was followed by three victories in seven days.

First off was an away win at Hitchin Town when talismanic striker Dan Sweeney pounced on a pin-point cross from Dylan Allen-Hadley and buried the ball in the net.

Next up was a local derby at Redditch United when Allen-Hadley scored on six minutes after a Omari Sterling-James free kick had flicked off a defensive head, leaving the Church man with time and space to curl a shot into the top corner of the net.

The coup de grace as far as table position was concerned came with the visit by Halesowen Town and both teams knowing the winner would end the day in top spot in the Southern League Premier Division Central.

It was, understandably, a tight tussle and the first-half stalemate came as no surprise.

The second half was going the same way until, with just six minutes remaining, teenager Dan Shaw, a late substitute, showed composure and no small amount of technical ability to curl a 20-yard effort into the top corner.

The game probably needed a moment of magic to break the stalemate, and Shaw, only signed on a month's loan from Blackburn Rovers the day before, did not disappoint.

So, with three successive 1-0 wins taking them to the summit as *The Village* went to press, minds were already turning to the next two matches, both at home and both against play-off place contenders Stamford and Stourbridge.

This will be a key time for Church to prove their mettle against the best in the division.

### New signings

AS WELL as bringing aboard Dan Shaw, Alvechurch FC re-signed goalkeeper Ronnie Hollingshead. Ronnie made a massive impression on the club last season while on loan from West Bromwich Albion, before returning to the club at the end of the season.

The deal was for an initial month loan and in the three games he has played so far, Ronnie is yet to concede a goal, as the side secured their three consecutive one-nil victories.

### Kieran's double

FORWARD Kieran Wakefield won both the player of the month and goal of the month award for August with his wonder strike to secure a victory away at Royston Town.

### Remembering Ray

IN MEMORY of lifelong Alvechurch supporter Ray Lloyd, a charity match has been arranged between an Alvechurch FC supporters XI and an Alvechurch FC old boys XI.

It will be played on September 29 2024 at Lye Meadow. Kick-off is at 2pm with gates opening at 1pm and food and drink available.

A spokesman said: "This is a fantastic opportunity to support both a wonderful gentleman and a lifelong supporter of Alvechurch.

■ Alvechurch have been drawn away to Evesham Utd in the first round of the Worcestershire FA Senior Cup, a repeat of last season's final, to be played week commencing Oct 7th.

## AFC FIXTURES

### October

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Sat 5th | FA Trophy 3rd qualifying round | |
| Sat 12th | Leiston (a) | 3pm |
| Tue 15th | AFC Telford Utd (a) | 7.45 |
| Sat 19th | St Ives Town (h) | 3pm |
| Tue 22nd | Halesowen Town | 7.45 |
| Sat 26th | FA Trophy 1st Round | |

### November

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Sat 2nd | AFC Sudbury (a) | 3pm |
| Sat 9th | Barwell (a) | 3pm |
| Sat 16th | Kettering Town (h) | 3pm |
| Sat 23rd | Bedford Town (h) | 3pm |
| Sat 30th | Broms Sporting (a) | 3pm |

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